THE ART OF ISLAM

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This introduction to the art of Islam is organized in two parts. The first is devoted to architecture and presents twelve great monuments in their local environment to show how Islamic architecture developed in various geographical regions. It highlights the remarkable diversity and originality of the architecture of each country or region. Ten major architectural elements are described and abundantly illustrated, including the minaret, the iwan, the minbar and the mihrab, and the construction of cupolas and the techniques of ceramic revetment are explained. The second part features a selection of masterpieces from the great dynasties of Islamic civilization, from the Umayyads to the Ottoman and the Mughal empires. The rich artistic characteristics of each are revealed in monuments, decoration, ceramics, glasswork, textiles, calligraphy and illustrated Korans.

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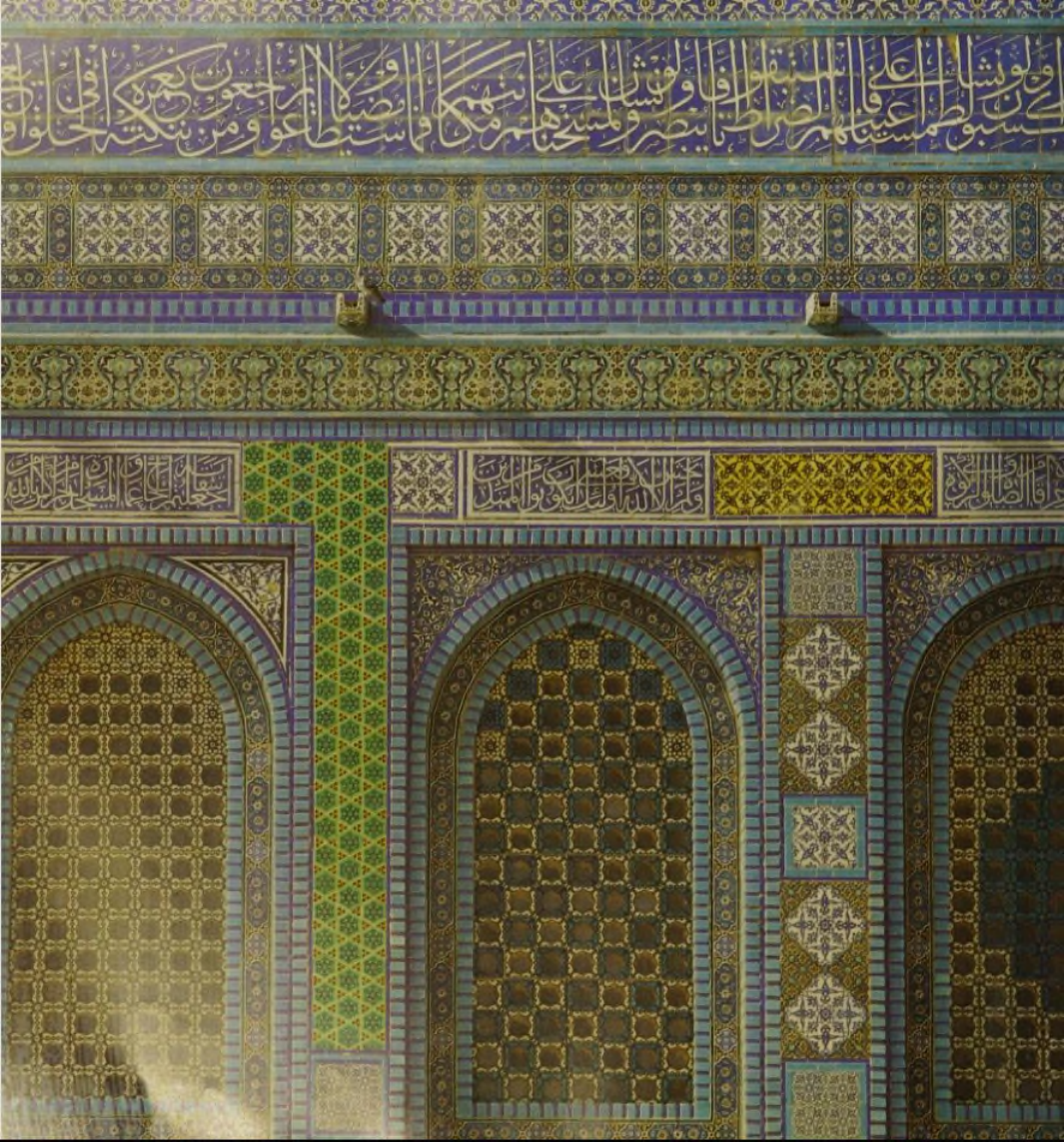


Introduction

The hegira, or hijra, commemorates the journey of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina. It corresponds to the year AD 622 and forms the starting point of the Muslim calendar. Within a decade of the Prophet's message, Islam had spread throughout the Arabian peninsula. With the religious faith came new social and political attitudes, and a culture which soon united the Near East, much of Asia, Africa and Spain. This culture gradually assimilated the traditions of the states and peoples it absorbed and transformed the various artistic styles of each region into a style of its own.

The Holy Koran formed the basis of the Islamic culture in every sense. Revealed in the Arabic language, it was not only a spiritual guide for all Muslim peoples, but also provided them with a legal, social and cultural foundation. Arabic, the medium of the sacred message, became the official language and appeared on buildings, textiles, pottery, wood and stone carving, metalwork and jewellery. Fine script, or calligraphy, was also developed for its own sake into one of the highest forms of Islamic art and is found in many different styles.

Since Islam has not encouraged the representation of the human figure in art, a unified decorative style evolved which was spread throughout the Islamic world by craftsmen travelling from one country to another. Often enormous distances were covered: for example, Central Asian artistic themes came to Anatolia via Iran through Turkish tribal migrations and with the Mongol armies.

From the beginning the mosque formed the heart of the Islamic city. It was the prime institution of Islam, constituting a further unifying cultural factor throughout the Islamic world.

Mosques differ according to period and area, but in their different ways reflect the unity of the Muslim world, not just as a place of prayer, but also as a centre of life around which cities developed. The mosque is not merely a gathering place for the faithful before and after the prayer ceremony, it is the dominant feature of the Islamic city. Examples of art forms in many different media can be found there: ceramics, tiles, calligraphy, glassware, textiles, carpets, stone and wood carvings, metalwork, stucco and the arts of the book.

Chapter 1

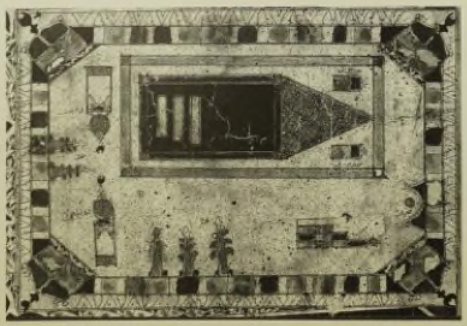
Architecture in its Environment

Mecca, Mosque of the Haram

The sanctuary at Mecca is a vast arcaded enclosure with the Kaaba at the centre. The Kaaba, a cube-like construction which houses the black Stone towards which Muslims turn in prayer, is surrounded by a paved path along which pilgrims perform their ritual circumambulation. The courtyard also contains the well of Zamzam, the domed shrine of Abraham/Ibrāhīm, an ancient colonnade and a great open-air *minbar* from which sermons are delivered on important Muslim religious occasions. The surrounding arcades, which took their present form in the 16th century, have recently been entirely rebuilt.

Pilgrimage scroll
1436
British Library, London

Attesting that a woman, Amīna bint Husayn, visited the shrines of the Hejaz, the western part of Saudi Arabia, this scroll contains detailed representations of the Haram at Mecca, the stations of the pilgrimage outside it, and the shrine at Medina, including the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad and its enclosure.



Umayyad Mosque
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
Early 8th century

The Great Mosque of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd was built on the site of the temple of Jupiter Damascenus, close to the main Roman street which crossed the city. The Umayyad building has undergone constant restorations but its basic plan has not been altered.

Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tûlûn
Cairo, Egypt
Founded 876

The mosque, founded by Ahmad Ibn Tûlûn, was built in conjunction with a palace at the centre of his city. The pointed arch was used extensively to support the roof and stucco wall coverings which decorated the mosque. Following the foundation of Cairo in 969, the urban centre moved north. Although the buildings around the mosque are relatively modern, the markets until recent years reached right up to the walls of the outer enclosure.

The Mediaeval Quarters
Fez, Morocco
c. 800

Founded by an 'Alid ruler, the city attracted immigrants from Andalusia and North Africa. Two of its mosques are 9th-century foundations, and in the following six centuries it was richly endowed with teaching institutions *(madrasas)* located near the tombs of holy men *(Zawiyas)*.

Süleymaniye
Istanbul, Turkey
1550-57

Built on a raised terrace overlooking the Golden Horn over the gardens of the old palace, the mosque is at the centre of a complex of buildings, which includes four *madrasas* (for the education of the upper echelons of the Ottoman bureaucracy), a hospital and medical school, a bath, a public soup kitchen and shops. Behind the mosque is a cemetery with the tombs of Süleyman the Magnificent and his wife Roxelane (or Hürrem Sultan).

Maydan Square of the Imam (formerly maydan of Shah ʿAbbas) Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
17th century

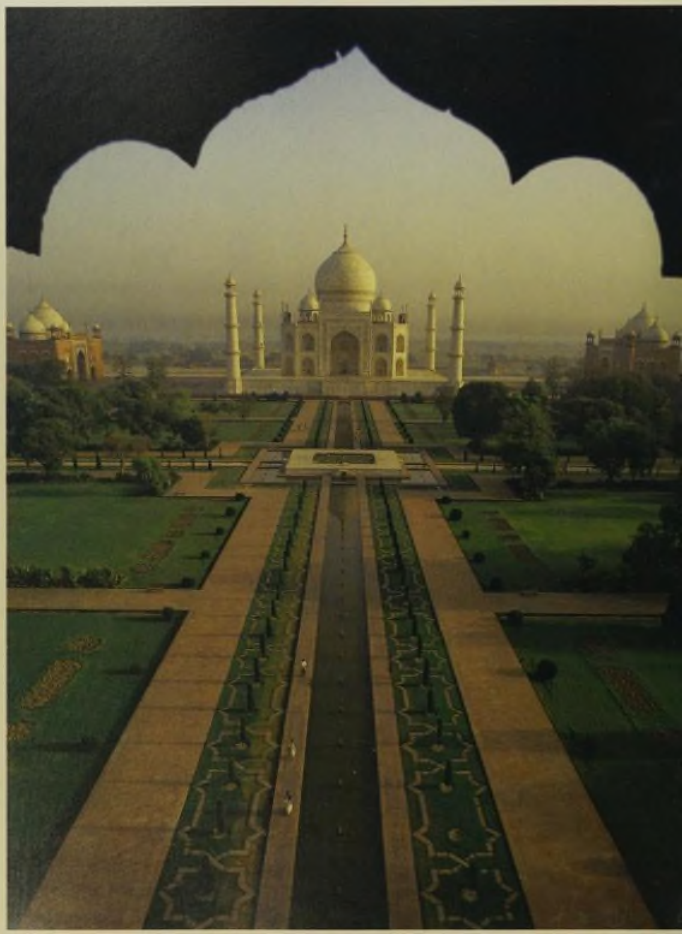
Following the transfer of his capital from Qazwin to Isfahan in the early 17th century, Shah ʿAbbas I had large areas laid out as gardens and promenades, and a vast rectangular space oriented roughly north-south was surrounded by bazaars and luxury shops. A monumental entrance, giving on to the bazaars, marked one end of the square while the entrance to his own mosque, begun in 1612, decorated the other. On the western side, the high grandstand of ʿAli Qapu, flimsily built but luxuriously decorated, was intended for watching polo matches in the Maydan below.
On the east side was the Masjid of Shaykh Lutfallāh. The planning was somewhat improvised and much of the building was completed by the successors of Shah ʿAbbas after his death in 1628.

Palace and mosque of Ishak Pasha
Doğubayazit, Turkey
Late 18th century

Constructed to be inaccessible in a mountainous area commanding the northwest Persian frontier, this building was the refuge of a Cildirogeullari lord who lived by plundering caravans and imprisoning travellers for ransom. The self-sufficient fortress was built with elaborately decorated stone. It comprised a palace, kitchens, a bath, a mosque and vaulted prisons, all in a hybrid style combining elements of Seljuk, Caucasian and Neapolitan baroque art.

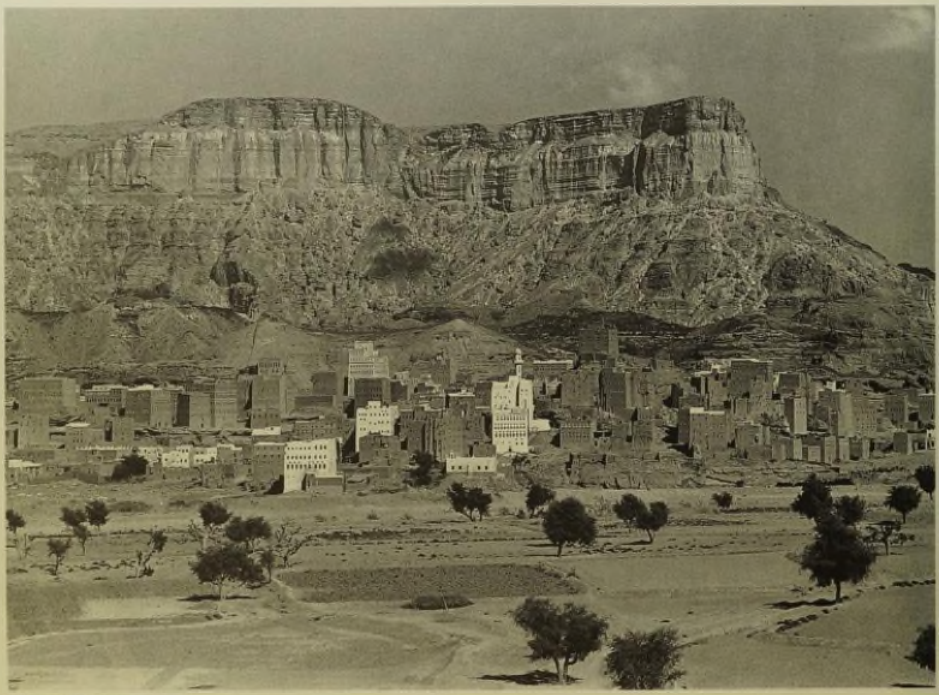
The Red Fort, Taj Mahal and surroundings
Agra, India

The Red Fort housed a series of palaces belonging to the Mughal emperors Akbar (circa 1570), Jahāngīr (circa 1604) and Shah Jahān (circa 1627), which combined Muslim and Hindu architectural elements. Custom and lack of space dictated that funerary architecture should be built outside the walls; the most sumptuous of these, the white marble Taj Mahal (1632-54) erected by Shah Jahān, was built on a plinth at the centre of a garden with canals and pools, in an *enceinte* with monumental gateways, audience halls and a mosque.



View of San'ā, Yemen

Owing to the mountainous terrain of northern Yemen, buildings are multi-storeyed to maximize the use of ground space available for construction. Typically, the walls are thick, the buildings taper at the top because of their height, and the upper storeys are decorated profusely, possibly in an effort to compensate for the narrowness of the façades.

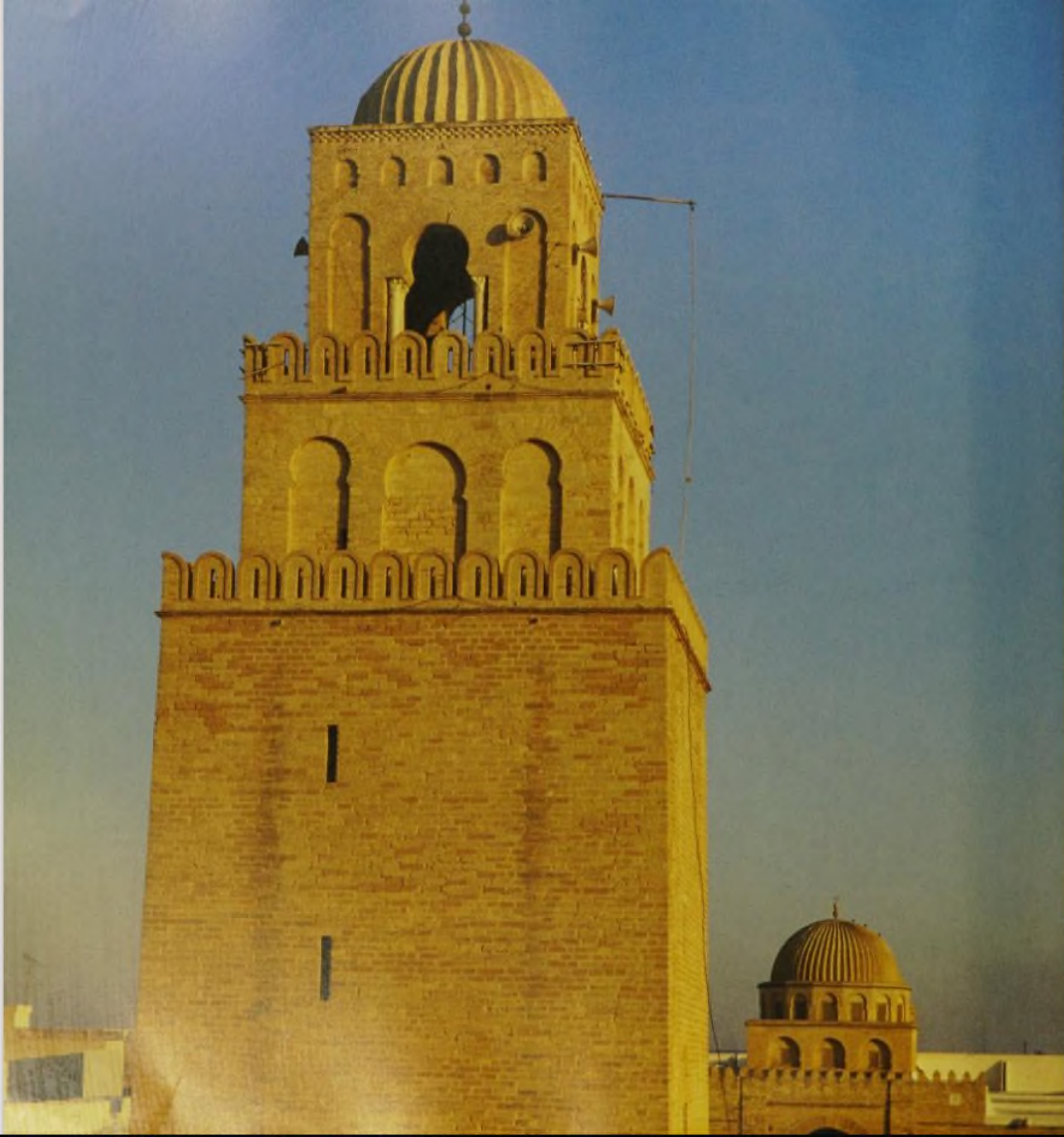


Village architecture
Wadi Hadramawt, Yemen

The slightly tapering multi-storeyed architecture typical of the Hadramawt harmonizes with the sharply eroded mountain landscape. Most of the buildings are plastered with mud, but a few are painted completely in white, which relieves the monotony and ...ses the architectural ...ns.

View of Ghardaia, Algeria

The low, flat-roofed houses climb up the hillside in terraces. In stark and deliberate contrast, the minarets rise high above their horizontally organized surroundings.



Chapter 2

Major Elements of Islamic Architecture

Minarets

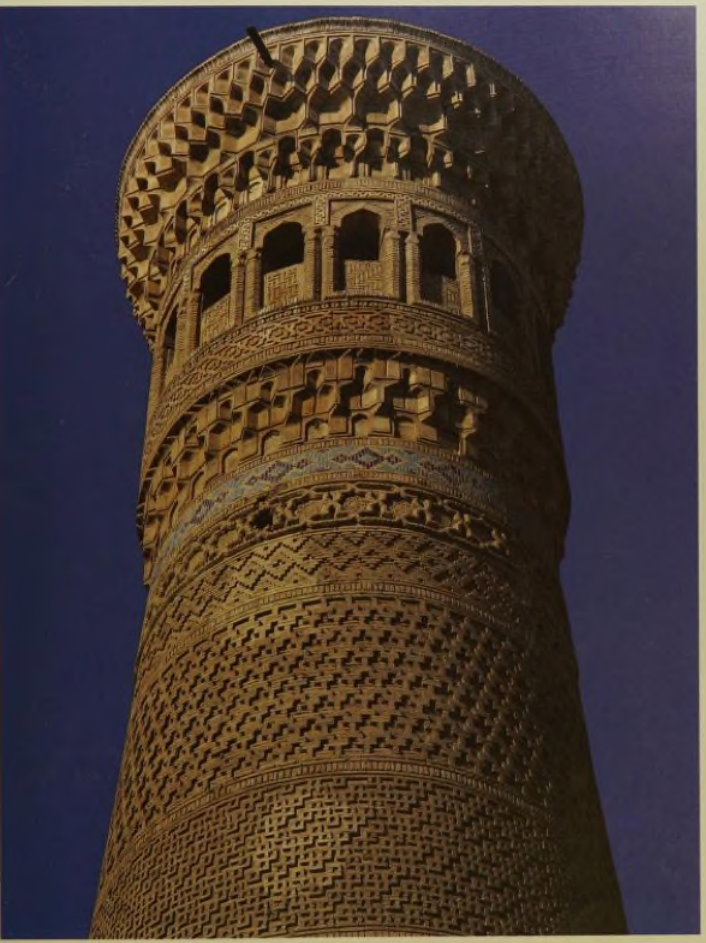
The intricately decorated tower-like structures, often of fine masonry, from which the call to prayer is given, have become a symbol of Islam. Yet early extant minarets are few; there was no standard model. Many great buildings had no minarets at all, and although by the year AD 1000 mosques were regularly built with minarets, they exhibited numerous local variations in material and decoration, and often were attached to shrines, mausoleums, *khanqahs* (dervish monasteries) and *madrasas* as well as to mosques. Sometimes they were commemorative, like the Qutb Minar at Delhi, which commemorates the Ghurid conquest of India in the late 12th century, or the successive minarets added to the mosques of Al-Azhar (Cairo) or to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. By the 15th century, particularly in Central Asia and in Mughal India, the symmetry of the plan dictated the multiplication of minarets above a porch or flanking a façade (where they may also actually buttress it). Aesthetic considerations of balance probably account for the six minarets of the mosque of Sultan Ahmed in Istanbul, although their number also contributes to the grandeur of the building. Such structures are not well adapted to the call to prayer, and minarets therefore were seen primarily as conspicuous indications from afar of the existence of a religious foundation.

Great Mosque, minaret
Qayrawan, Tunisia

The only likely remains of the Umayyad Mosque, which was almost entirely rebuilt in 836, is the three-tiered minaret, one of the earliest in Islam, and a three-tiered structure whose topmost storey is made of 13th-century brick. Minarets were often left standing simply because they were too difficult to demolish.

Great Mosque, minaret
Samarra, Iraq
848-52

The free-standing minaret, set on a square plinth and located on the same axis as the *mihrab*, is composed of an anti-clockwise spiral tower. A platform, which evidently bore a small wooden pavilion, crowned it. This minaret served as the model for that of Abû Dulaf at Samarra (860-61) and very probably for that of Ibn Tûlûn in Cairo, although its original structure has not survived.



Kalyan Mosque, minaret
Bukhara, USSR
Early 12th century

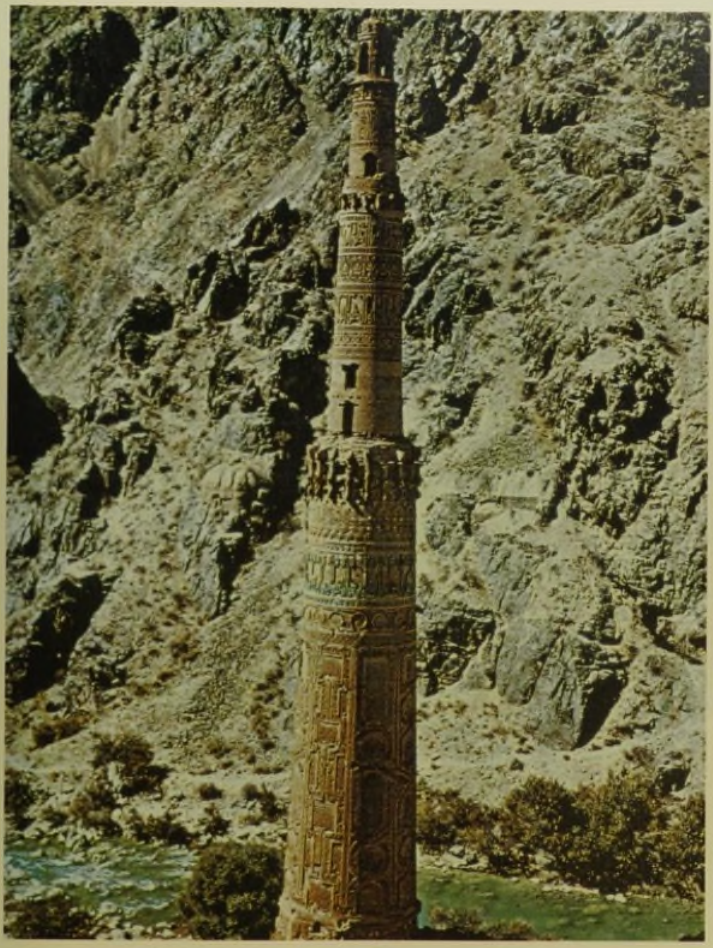
The tapering brick minaret, 46 metres high, is decorated with geometric bands of brick strapwork. The profile suggests that the builder had not forgotten his training in mud-brick architecture.

Great Mosque (the Kutubiyya),
minaret
Marrakesh, Morocco
12th century

The minaret follows the classical Andalusian-Maghribi tradition – it is square and crowned with a smaller pavilion. On the exterior the windows are set in decorative niches, some of which show traces of paint, and are crowned with a frieze of intersecting blind arches.

Mosque of Bahrām Shah
Ghaznavid dynasty
Ghazni, Afghanistan
Late 11th-early 12th century

Only the brick minaret, star-shaped in plan, remains of the original mosque.



Minaret
Jam, Afghanistan
1162-1202

The minaret, located in an inaccessible mountain valley, was attached to a Great Mosque which has not survived. A brick structure of four successively tapering storeys, almost 70 metres high, it contains on the second storey an (incomplete) foundation inscription in a turquoise-coloured glazed brick. Exceptionally inventive use was made of terra-cotta revetment plaques decorated with Kufic inscriptions from the Koran in the form of interlace ornament.

Qutb Minar
New Delhi, India
Begun 1199

The minaret was added to a mosque built of stone plundered from Hindu temples by the victorious Ghurid ruler, Muhammad Sām, to mark the triumph of Islam and the choice of Delhi as the Ghurids' capital. Like the mosque, the minaret bears inscriptions commemorating the victory. The series of tapering storeys, with corbelled profiles and lavish carved ornament with stalactite corbels, derives directly from the terra-cotta and brick decorated structures of 12th-century Ghaznavid and Ghurid Afganistan.

Great Mosque, minaret
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
14th century

The minarets stand on the site of the towers of the pre-existing Roman temple enclosure. The present structure, popularly known as the 'Bride's minaret', dates to the Mamluk period.

Selimiye
Edirne, Turkey
1569-75

The mosque of Selim II, described by the great Ottoman architect Sinan as his masterpiece, has four minarets which serve partly as buttresses to counterbalance the outward thrust of the domed space.

Tomb of Jâhangîr
Lahore, Pakistan 1627

The square tomb centred in a monumental garden is crowned by tiered octagonal minarets decorated with a chevron pattern. The proliferation of minarets is not due to any religious cause but rather to a desire for architectural symmetry.

Great Mosque, minaret
Agadez, Niger
Probably 19th century

The tapering minaret of adobe is reinforced with cross-beams projecting from the walls and its great height attests to the skill of the local builders in the use of such a relatively weak material as mud.

Amin Mosque, minaret
Turfan, West China
19th century

The sharply tapering conical form and the bands of decorative brickwork are the product of an architectural revival which swept Central Asia from Khiva to Kashghar in the early 19th century.

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The Dome of the Rock
Jerusalem, al-Haram al-Sharif, built by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik, 691-92

The Dome of the Rock, octagonal in plan, was built on a site which already by the late 7th century had become associated with the Prophet's Night Journey (mi'râj, isrâ).
From the exterior, the building, although much restored, comprises a stone-arcaded octagon, a circular drum with polychrome tile facing, and a gilt dome. The interior consists of a double wooden dome, set on a tall drum, which covers the centre of the large octagon. This dome is supported by piers and columns forming two ambulatories, and is covered with polychrome and gilt arabesques of the 14th century or later. The piers and arcades of the ambulatories, however, retain their original mosaics, richly designed, while above the dado of split marble panelling, the walls have lost their revetment of gold and polychrome mosaic.

Domed Spaces

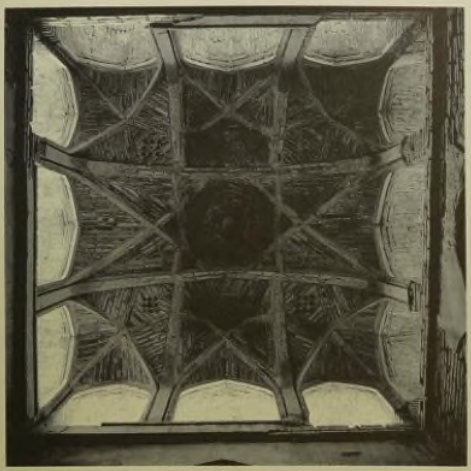
Islam, like other great civilizations, has always been sensitive to the impressive effect of domed spaces, both from outside, making the building conspicuous from afar, and from inside, awing the visitor. Early domes were cautiously built, normally spanning a square bay, but later a simpler solution was found and the rectangular base of the dome was heightened rather than its span increased. The earliest large domes were of wood, but the use of baked brick in Abbasid Mesopotamia spread rapidly all over Islam. By the 15th century, stone domes were widespread from Syria and Egypt to the Indian subcontinent, but even the great Ottoman architects of the 16th century failed to match the span of Justinian's church (now a mosque); the Haghia Sophia, in Istanbul. More recently ingenious use has been made of mud-brick with an elaborate timber scaffolding to form domes in the Islamic architecture of Central Africa.

Great Mosque, dome over *mihrab*
Cordoba, Spain
c. 965

The ribbed domes are completely covered with glass mosaic. The bay is one of three very elaborate structures which give onto the ruler's enclosure *(maqsûra)*.

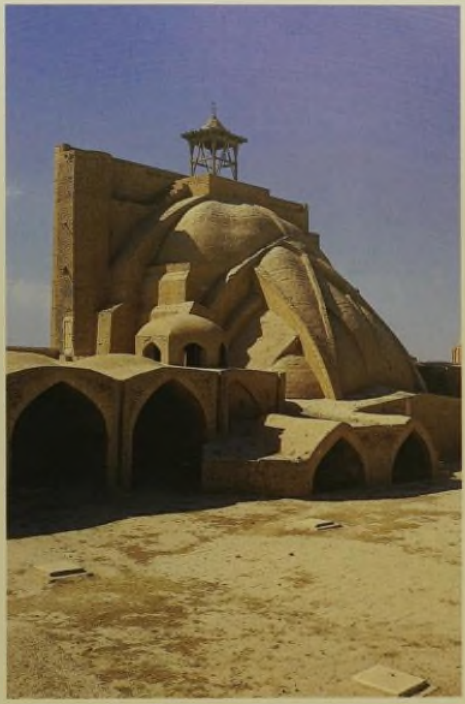
Great Mosque, dome over *mihrab*
Tlemcen, Algeria
Completed 1136

The intersecting ribs of the dome are of brick while the infill is of openwork stucco arabesques. The vault recalls the luxurious tracery of the 10th-century domes of Cordoba.



Great Mosque, vault of a bay on the *qibla* side of the mosque
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
Late 11th century

The arcades of the *qibla* in the original 8th to 9th-century Abbasid mosque were altered radically under the Seljuks, when a monumental domed bay, in brick and open-sided, was built to house the *mihrab*. On either side were bays with intersecting ribbed brick vaults.

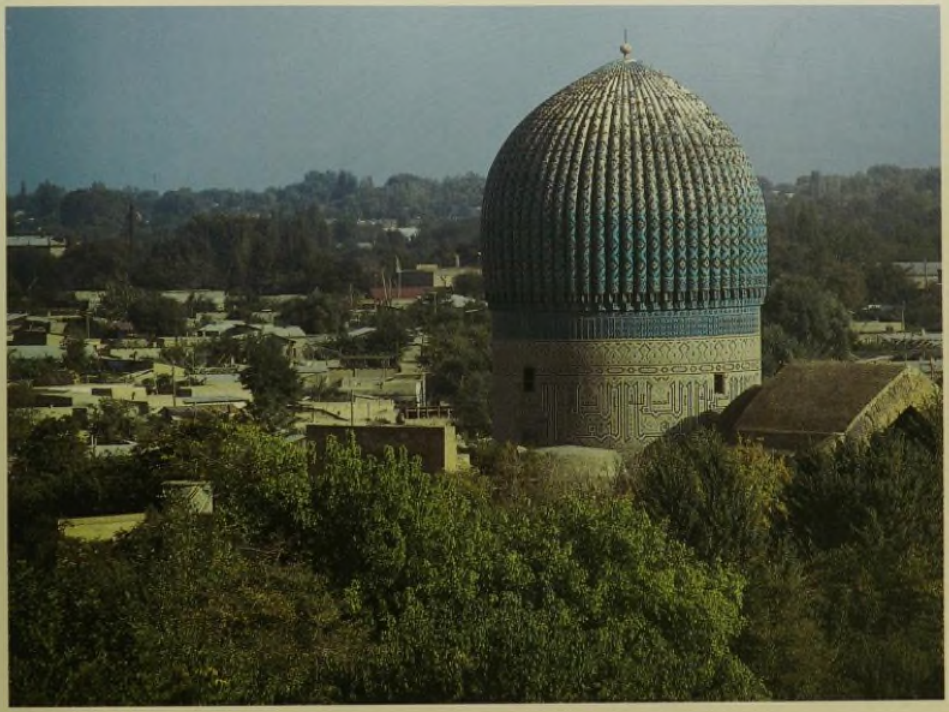


Great Mosque, rear of the western *iwan*
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
11th century

The semi-domes of the *iwans* were buttressed by an elaborate system of ribs and carved segments.

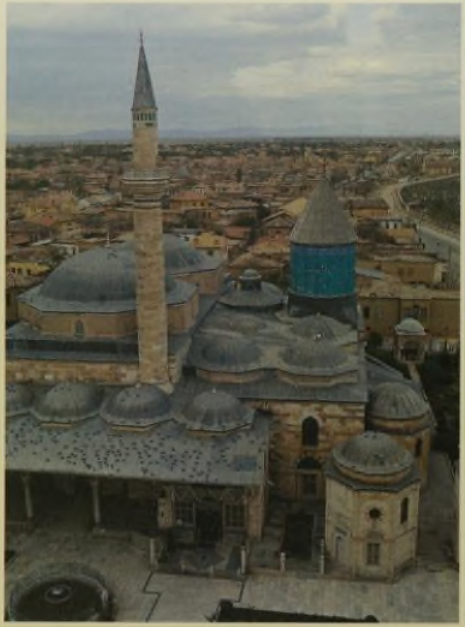
Bībī Khanum Mosque
Samarkand, USSR
Begun 1399

Only ruins remain of the domed chamber above the *mihrab* and of the massive open tiled-veneer porch that preceded it.



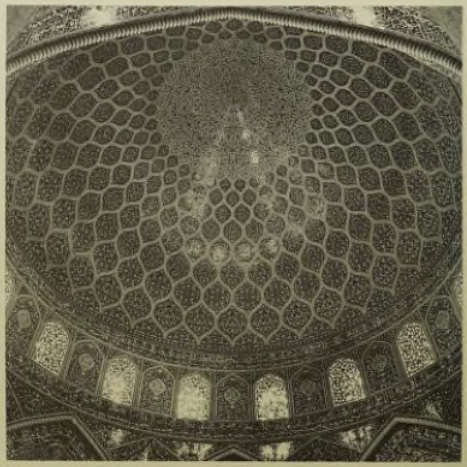
Gûr-i Mîr
Samarkand, USSR
Early 15th century

Timur (Tamerlane) was buried in the *Khanqah-Madrasa* built by his favourite son, who predeceased him. Soon afterwards his grandson Ulugh Beg turned it into a dynastic mausoleum and had a cenotaph of Siberian jade placed over his own tomb.



Mausoleum of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, dome
Konya, Turkey
13th century and later

The building, which also functioned as the main house of the Mevlevi, or whirling dervishes, was restored in the early 16th century. The tomb of Jalāl al-Dīn, who even in his lifetime was revered as a saint, has long been a place of pilgrimage.



Mosque of Shaykh Lutfallāh
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
1617

Built in conjunction with the Maydan-i Shah ʿAbbās, the dome is remarkable for its polychrome earthenware tiles, both inside and out.

Mausoleum
Taribsa, Yemen

From the early centuries of Islam, domed constructions were popular as a means of aggrandizing mausoleums, despite considerable orthodox disapproval. The profile of the dome and its transitional zone show local variations, yet such architectural forms, though probably recent, clearly reflect much older traditions.

Mosque of Sultan Ahmed
Istanbul, Turkey
Early 17th century

Since Istanbul is subject to earthquakes, architects have to build with safety factors in mind. Perhaps this explains the disproportion between the four massive piers supporting the dome, which is built up of buttressed tiers of semi-domes, and the span of the whole.

Capitals, Columns and Arches

Great Mosque, capitals, columns and arches
Cordoba, Spain
Founded 785-87

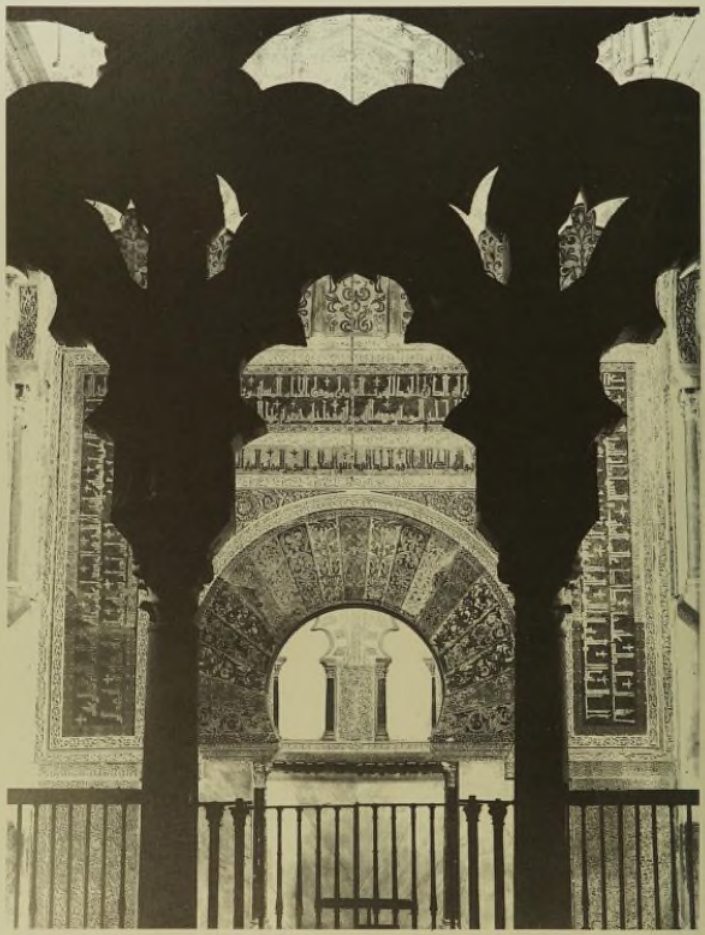
The first site chosen for the Umayyad mosque at Cordoba was on sloping ground and could not be levelled easily, while the Roman or Visigothic capitals and columns available were of different sizes. Thus regular arcades were ruled out and the solution, possibly inspired by the aqueducts of Roman Spain, was to construct tiers of arches. The bi-coloured *(ablaq)* voussoirs come from Roman Syria and doubtlessly were introduced by the Syrian garrison that the Umayyads maintained at Cordoba.

The pointed arch, with two or more centres, appeared in Islamic architecture by the 8th century and was adopted everywhere as an effective means of increasing the height of arcades. In Western Islamic regions, horseshoe arches, both round and pointed, remained popular. Arches in many Islamic areas are lobed, cusped or broken, with elaborately decorated soffits or borders that lend interest to surface and profile. Arcades, which are indefinitely extensible, become a feature of basilical mosque plans, although often they require artificial reinforcements like wooden tie-beams, which may also be heavily decorated.

Both arcades and domes in massive architecture need brick and stone piers. However, in numerous Islamic buildings, arcades are light screen walls. This and the taste for luxurious decoration explain the importance of columns (often Roman or Byzantine marble ones which are re-used) with decorated bases and capitals. Many of the latter are re-used too, or else are adaptations of Roman Corinthian capitals. But stalactite faceting, both in wood and in stone, is a decorative device that originated in Islamic art.

Chinese Muslim architecture generally adopts traditional architectural forms. In the grandiose mud-brick architecture of many Islamic regions, too, the arches spring not from columns, but from the ground in a single grand sweep.

Screen arches of al-Hakam (961-66): in the axial bay immediately before the dome over the *mihrab*, a raised pavilion known as the 'Capilla de Villaviciosa' was built with a ribbed vault. The upper arcade comprises a type of screen wall with intersecting tiers of horseshoe arches, which was an adaptation of the multi-tiered arcades of the original building.



Great Mosque
Wasit, Iraq
Early 8th century

Of the Umayyad mosque nothing remains but this column decorated with motifs inspired by the crowns of the Sasanian kings, whom the Arabs conquered in 641.

Nō Gunbad
Balkh, Afghanistan
10th century or later

Quincuncial in plan, this mosque was constructed with stout cylindrical piers, compressed rectangular capitals or impost-blocks and arcades with elaborately carved stucco work.

Quwwat al-Islam Mosque
New Delhi, India
c. 1197

Erected mostly with elements taken from Hindu temples, the mosque was built to commemorate the Ghurid conquest of North India. In 1199 the heterogeneous result was unified by a stone screen wall on the *qibla* side of the courtyard.

Mosque of Aba Khoja
Kashi, Western China
18th century or later

The architecture of Kashi combines traditional flat-roofed mud-brick architecture with Chinese decorative elements (notably beams). The stalactite-carved wooden capital marks a deliberate attempt to give the building an Islamic character.

Eşrefoğlu Mosque wooden columns
Beyşehir, South-Western Turkey
1299

Wood has traditionally been a luxury material in Islamic architecture, and although it is easy to carve and sculpt, few such capitals survive. However, 13th-century Anatolian great mosques, which are often basilical in plan, are built to a scale that is very suitable for wooden columns and capitals.

So-called 'Abbasid Palace', actually a *madrasa*
Baghdad, Iraq
c. 1240-50

The vaulting of this narrow corridor is composed ingeniously of faceted capitals or corbels joined at the top to form broken arches with stepped profiles. Above these transitional zones, small stalactite domes cover each bay.

Capital
Raqqa, Syrian Arab Republic
Late 8th century
National Museum, Damascus

Raqqa was essentially an Abbasid foundation of the reign of Hārûn al-Rashîd and its architectural remains therefore date from the 9th century or later. However, capitals found there show the continuing influence of the late Roman tradition of Corinthian columns and acanthus volutes on Abbasid ornament.

Great Mosque, largely rebuilt
Zaria, Nigeria
Early 19th century

The steep, pointed arches with engaged piers are constructed of mud-brick reinforced with palm trunks. Such arches are characteristic of Islamic mud-brick architecture of Western Africa and show the brilliant use of inexpensive materials.

Façades, Entrances, Arcades, Courtyards and *Iwans*

Some of the most famous buildings of Islam possess entrances which give no idea of the scale of the building behind them. But by the 10th century, grand entrances both plain and decorated appeared. The idea was probably derived from palace architecture which had to impress the visitor from the outset. The entrances generally are stoutly built, dominate the façade and often form independent blocks. Doorways are recessed in decorative frames with elaborate stalactite canopies, and where the plan allows, are located on the axes of the building. For many façades, the grand entrance may not be enough and so may be flanked by open balconies or minarets, which from the 14th century onwards were built at the corners not only as buttresses but also as architectural accents. Thus the exterior façade often echoes the arcades of the prayer-hall or the *qibla*.

The almost universal inclusion of courtyards in the planning of mosques is probably a reaction to the rarity of open spaces in the centre of Islamic cities. They were used for assemblies, study and trade, in the same way as the forum of Roman cities before them, while the surrounding arcades provided shade. In some regions of Islam, though not all, the courtyard contained the fountain for the obligatory ritual ablutions before prayer in the mosque.

It was customary in early mosques and palaces to mark the axis of the prayer-hall with a grand triple entrance, sometimes surmounted by a decorative dome and containing a raised passage to the *mihrab*. Open porches (*iwans*) were also

al-Zaytuna Mosque
Tunis, Tunisia
Rebuilt 856-63

The courtyard façade and the domes are late 10th-century additions plainly inspired by the Great Mosque at Qayrawan (after the major refurbishment of 862). The axial bay has an impressive clerestory. In the 15th century under the Hafsids, a monumental raised gallery and shops were added on the western side. This then became the main façade.

adopted not only as entrances but also to mark the axis of the building, and considerations of architectural symmetry encouraged *iwans* on the cross axis, creating a four-*iwan* plan. Such *iwans* generally preceded the domed chambers, and their decorative frames, which towered above the low prayer halls, were elaborately buttressed from behind.

Great Mosque, north porch
Divriği, Turkey
c. 1228

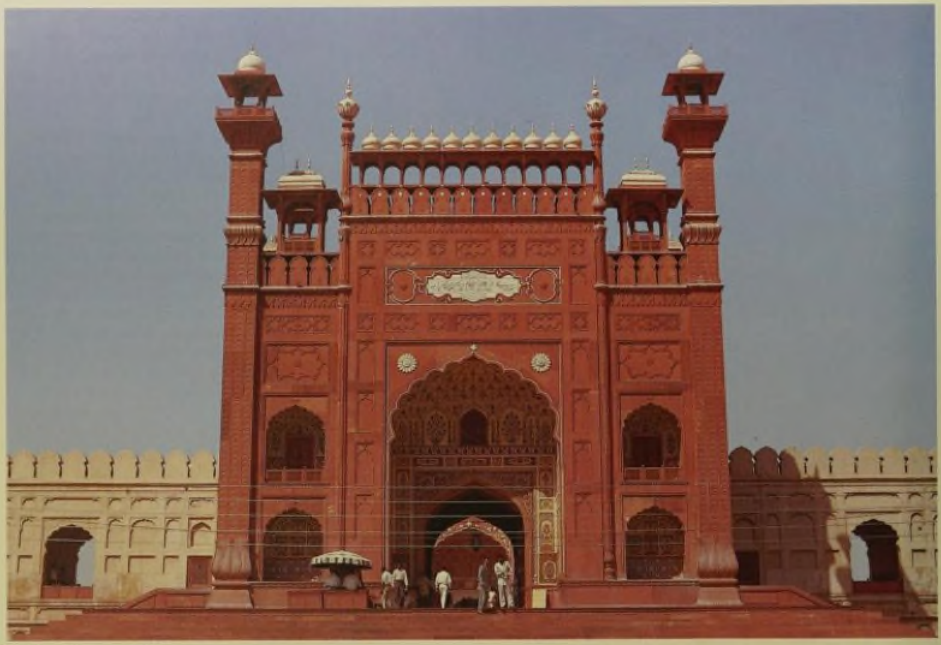
The mosque, attached to a hospital foundation, is roofed entirely with a variety of domes and vaults, the one over the *mihrab* bay being the most elaborate. The mosque has two entrances in markedly different styles: the northern one, set in a larger frame, is decorated with an abundance of architectural mouldings and ornate details which show the brilliance of 13th-century stonework in Anatolia.

Mosque of Sultan Hasan, entrance
Cairo, Egypt
Begun 1356

The monumental entrance, one of the grandest in Islam, is constructed of an unfinished projecting block with a deep porch, which was originally intended to be surmounted by two minarets.

Great Mosque, courtyard
Yazd, Islamic Republic of Iran
14th-15th centuries

The Great Mosque incorporates elements of very different periods. In the later 14th century these were unified by arcades in the courtyard and by an *iwan* on the *qibla* side, facing the domed *mihrab*. Rich polychrome tile mosaic covered the additions. The main entrance, now to the east, was built in the 15th century and is composed of a great rectangular frame crowned by two tapering minarets which dominate the rest of the mosque. Within the frame, a high ogive arch is surrounded by blind niches covered in mosaic revetments.

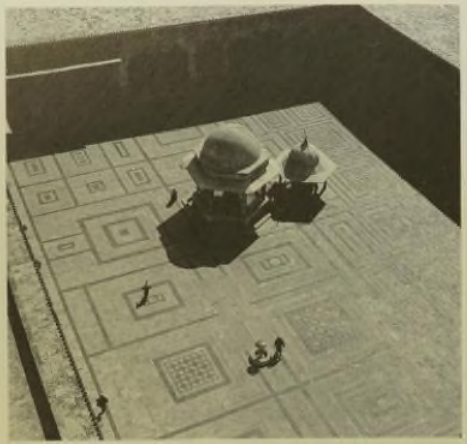


Padshahi Mosque, gateway
Lahore, Pakistan
1673-74

The pink sandstone gateway, flanked by slender towers and approached by a grand staircase, is topped by turrets and a canopied platform.

Great Mosque
Mopti, Mali
Rebuilt 1935

Impressive use can be made of mud as a building material, even in areas with a relatively high rainfall. Both tapering buttresses and sharply grooved walls are devices used to carry off heavy rain before it can damage the fabric. This type of mud structure, while reflecting local architectural traditions, is nevertheless somewhat impermanent and demands periodic rebuilding.

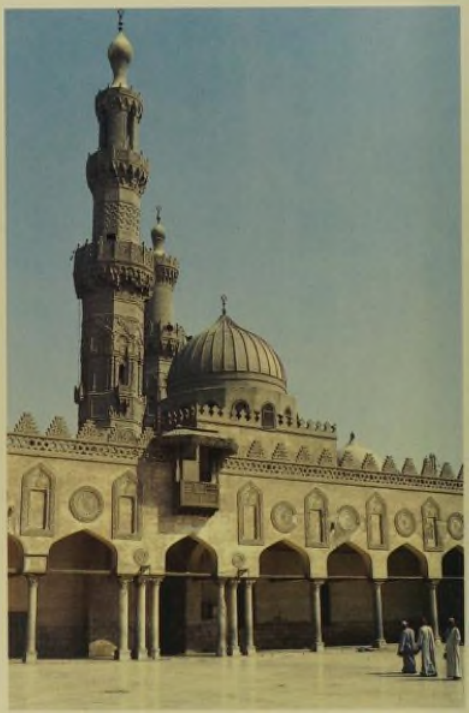


Great Mosque, courtyard
Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic

The plan of the mosque is still basically that of an Umayyad foundation (circa 715) but the fabric is Seljuk or later in date and the stone arcades around the courtyard are probably from the 13th century. Typically for early mosques of Syrian type, the courtyard contains small domed buildings, drinking fountains (not for ablutions) and treasuries or libraries, although by the 13th century, these had probably ceased to function.

Mosque of Al-Azhar, courtyard
Cairo, Egypt
Founded 969

The courtyard was gradually restored in the early 12th century with fine Roman marble columns and capitals and an upper storey of decorative blind niches.



al-Qarâwiyyin Mosque, courtyard
Fez, Morocco
Founded 859, mainly restored in the Almoravid period, 1135-44

The courtyard is surrounded by horseshoe arches and punctuated with projecting side pavilions. These are linked by a canal and lead to a central pool that probably dates from the 17th century. The mosque is one of the most important in the Maghrib for its decoration and furniture.

Mosque of Sultan Hasan, courtyard
Cairo, Egypt
Begun 1356
The interior contains a vestibule with a bi-coloured stone dome. The mosque stands on a different axis, built according to the four-*iwan* plan with a multi-storey *madrasa* in each corner and *iwans* towering above the courtyard.

Mosque of Gawhar Shâd, courtyard
Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran
c. 1420
This is one of the most sumptuously decorated buildings in Iran and Central Asia. The high *iwan* in front of the domed *mihrab* area is decorated with a complex polychromed tile mosaic in which cobalt blue is the dominant colour.

Great Mosque, western *iwan*
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
Restored in the 15th century
or later

The four-*iwan* plan was superimposed on a plan for an Abbasid-type basilical mosque with an arcaded courtyard. The daring stalactite vault is formed of a decorative brick shell hung from the masonry core.

Great Mosque, façade of prayer-hall with later restorations
Xian, China, Hua Jei Jing
1392-1522

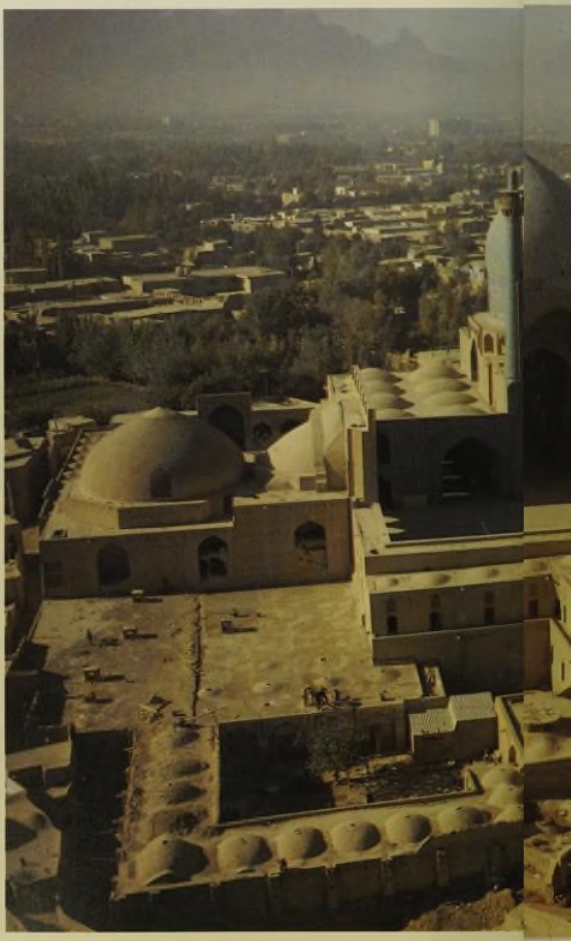
The plan of the mosque consists of a series of long courtyards comprising gardens and pavilions, and, immediately in front of the gabled prayer-hall, a small open courtyard flanked by low stone walls.

Padshahi Mosque
Lahore, Pakistan
1673-74

The courtyard with minarets at the corners is so vast that the prayer-hall is virtually a separate building. The façade of the mosque, flanked by faceted turrets, has a dramatically raised axial entrance backed by the silhouettes of three bulbous domes.

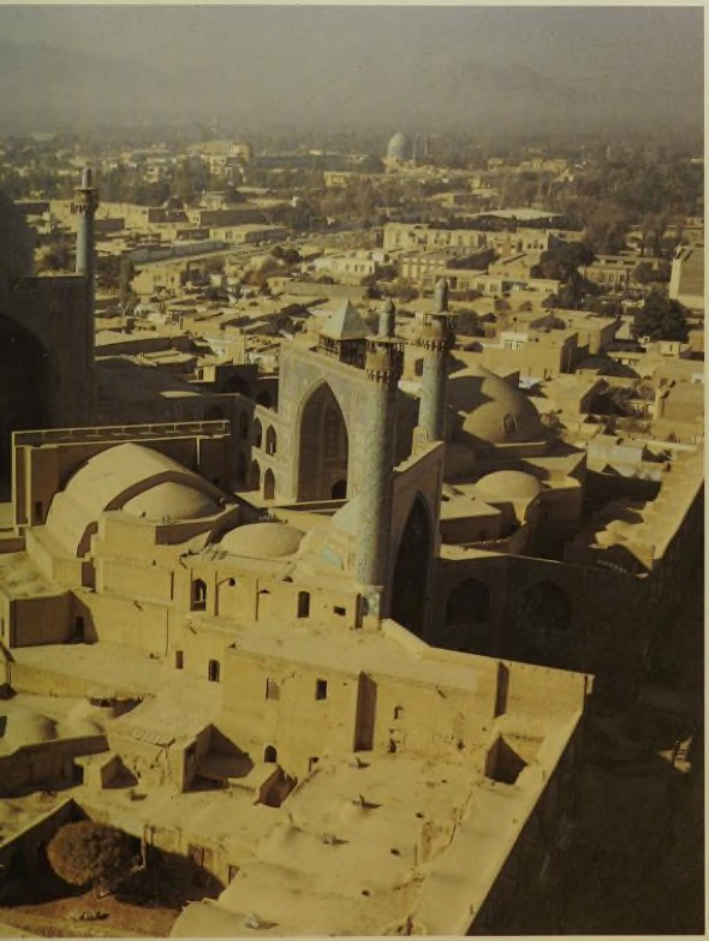
Al-Mikdar Mosque
Tarim, Yemen

The courtyard façade is crowned with decorative bands of lozenge-work and a balcony with finials and open-work balustrades.



Bayt al-Badr, inner courtyard
Kuwait
19th century

The great merchant families of Kuwait lived in low flat-roofed houses arranged around interconnecting courtyards. The main reception block was preceded by a grand arcade.



Mosque of the Imam (mosque of Shah ʿAbbās)
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
17th century

This mosque possessed a courtyard, domed *mihrab* area and three smaller *iwans* with galleries of cells between them. The side *iwans* also fronted domed chambers.

Ceramic and Marble Revetment

Initially, surface decoration in Islamic architecture, as in the eastern provinces towards the end of the Roman Empire, was of carved and painted stucco because it was inexpensive. In certain parts of the Islamic world rich in stone, like Syria and Turkey, the primacy of stone-carving was never challenged; but in much of the Islamic world where the only building material available was brick (baked or unbaked), facing materials assumed an overwhelming decorative importance; first in the form of bricks laid in decorative courses, then as terra-cotta unglazed tiles, and finally as glazed tiles. The glazing was initially limited to turquoise inscription bands on *mihrabs*, friezes and framing arches, both inside and outside buildings. The tradition was strongest in Turkey, Iran and Central Asia. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, the range of techniques and colour schemes was vastly extended.

In other areas of Islamic influence, particularly Spain and the Maghrib, tilework was always relegated to second place by decorated and painted plaster, which was generally limited for climatic reasons to interiors. Finally, in Syria, Egypt and Mughal India, tilework gave way to decorative revetments of stone, coloured marbles, alabaster or porphyry, with inlay in contrasting colours.

Glazed tile mosaic revetment
Great Mosque
Isfahan, Islamic
Republic of Iran

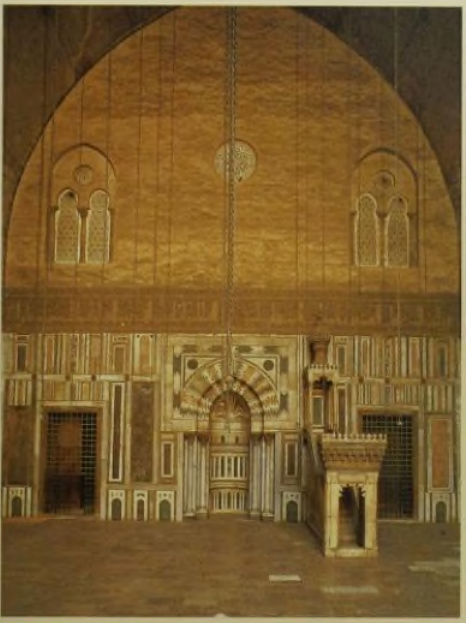
The glazed tile mosaic revetments of the building date from the early 14th century. Thereafter the initial colour scheme of turquoise, cobalt and black was gradually enlarged and the tilework assumed a major role in the decoration.

Cemetery of Shah-i Zinde, mausoleum façade attributed to the craftsman
'Alû Nasafi
Samarkand, USSR
c. 1380

This relief decoration, which includes various types of overglaze and underglaze painted tiles, makes particular use of 'square Kufic', which transcribes verses of the Koran in an angular script without diacritical signs.

Great Mosque
Malatya, Turkey
c. 1225-70

The interior courtyard, the dome over the *mihrab* and the *iwan* facing it are covered with turquoise, cobalt and black tilework inscriptions, scrollwork and angular cartouches.

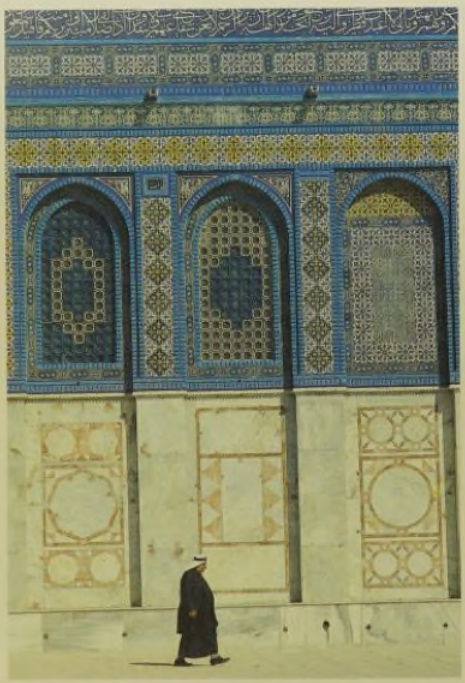


Mosque of Sultan Hasan
Cairo, Egypt
Begun 1356

The *qibla* wall and the *mihrab* niche are partly covered with marble and porphyry panels, round or rectangular in form. The upper part of the *mihrab* is inlaid with elaborately carved coloured stone. The taste for marble in Egypt during the Mamluk period almost entirely replaced the tilework used in Turkey, Mesopotamia and Iran.

Blue Mosque
Tabriz, Islamic Republic of Iran
Built 1463

This is an inscription medallion in tile mosaic from the main entrance porch. The building is one of the finest examples of the Persian tradition of tile mosaic.



Dome of the Rock, exterior marble revetment and tilework
Haram, Jerusalem

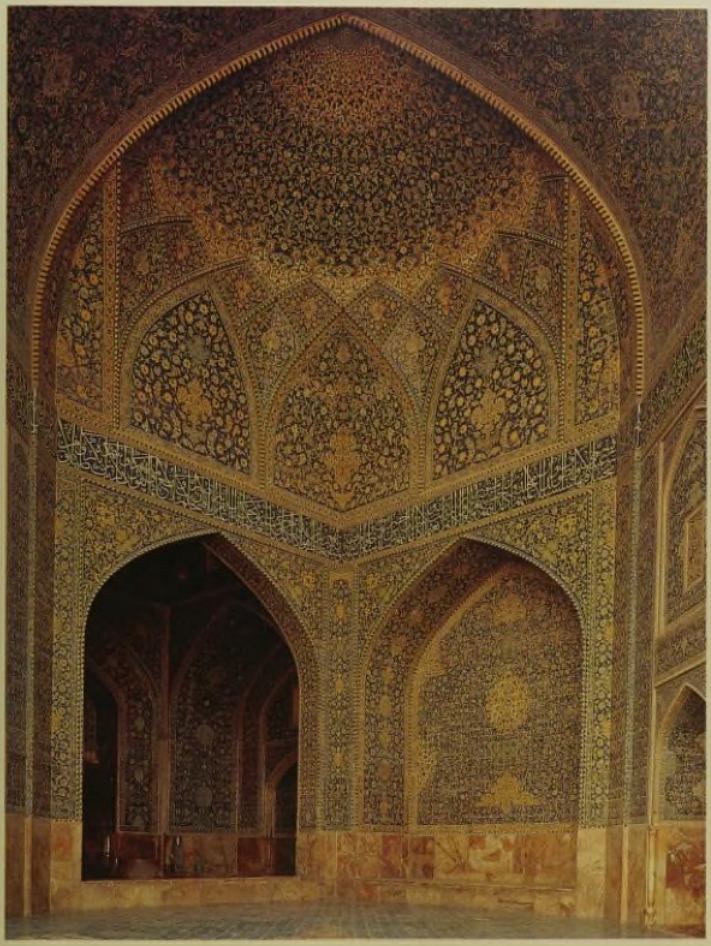
The marble revetment, some of which dates from the foundation of the building in 692, was a favourite form of decoration in early Umayyad architecture. The tilework was added under Süleyman the Magnificent around 1540-50 but was later restored, most recently in the 1960s.

Tile panel
Ottoman Turkey
17th century
Musée du Louvre, Paris

This tile represents the shrine at Medina with the Tomb of the Prophet. The fringed border and niche motif recall a prayer carpet.

Taj Mahal, decoration of inlaid coloured stone in white marble masonry
1632-54
Agra, India

This technique was favoured by architects in the last period of the Mughal Empire.



Mosque of the Imam (mosque of Shah ʿAbbas)
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
1612-37

Although the decoration of the mosque was completed only after the death of the shah, the tile revetments (not mosaic but painted under the glaze) indicate a response to the necessities of mass production.

Transitional Zones in Architecture

Transitional elements, often surmounted by tall drums, are necessary to support the dome. Architecturally there are two basic types: pendentives where the stress is exerted outwards, and squinches which bear the stress vertically downwards. Owing to the architectural importance of the dome, these elements attracted decoration on their elegantly curved surfaces. Pendentives could be cut away course by course, suggesting that the top course was supported by a series of stalactite ledges, but squinches lent themselves even better to compartmentalization in tiers, adding variety without detracting from the decorative effect. Ribbed domical vaults in theory require no transitional zone, but already by the 10th century the great ribbed vaults at Cordoba display decorative elements at the corners which are reminiscent of stalactites or *muqarnas*. In later Maghribi architecture, stalactite vaulting is no longer confined to the transitional zones of domes but becomes a decorative canopy, while in 15th-century Central Asia and Iran entire plaster ceilings are constructed of false vaults derived from transitional elements.

Cupola of the entrance
of the Maristan al-Nuri
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
1145

Maristan al-Nuri
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
1145

Stalactite vaults were used not merely as transitional zones, but, piled one upon the other, they also formed slender conical or pyramidal domes whose structural nature was apparent on the exterior. This practice is characteristic of brick tomb architecture in 12th to 13th-century Baghdad, and is rarer in Syria and Turkey where it was executed in stone.

Al-Aqsâ' Mosque, squinch of the dome over the *mihrab*
Haram, Jerusalem

The low squinch and the glass mosaic covering probably date from restorations of the mosque under the Fatimids in the 1020s.

Alhambra, Court of Lions pavilion
Granada, Spain
14th century

Architecturally, *muqarnas* vaulting was unnecessary here to span the roofs of the various apartments; instead it was used ornamentally to decorate the capitals, disguise the cross-beams and suggest domed vaults.

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Mosque of the Imam (mosque of Shah 'Abbās) entrance porch
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
1612-37

The vault of the entrance porch is covered with a plaster shell of stalactites entirely overlaid with polychrome tilework.

Mosque of Sultan Hasan, vestibule *muqarnas*
Cairo, Egypt
Begun 1356

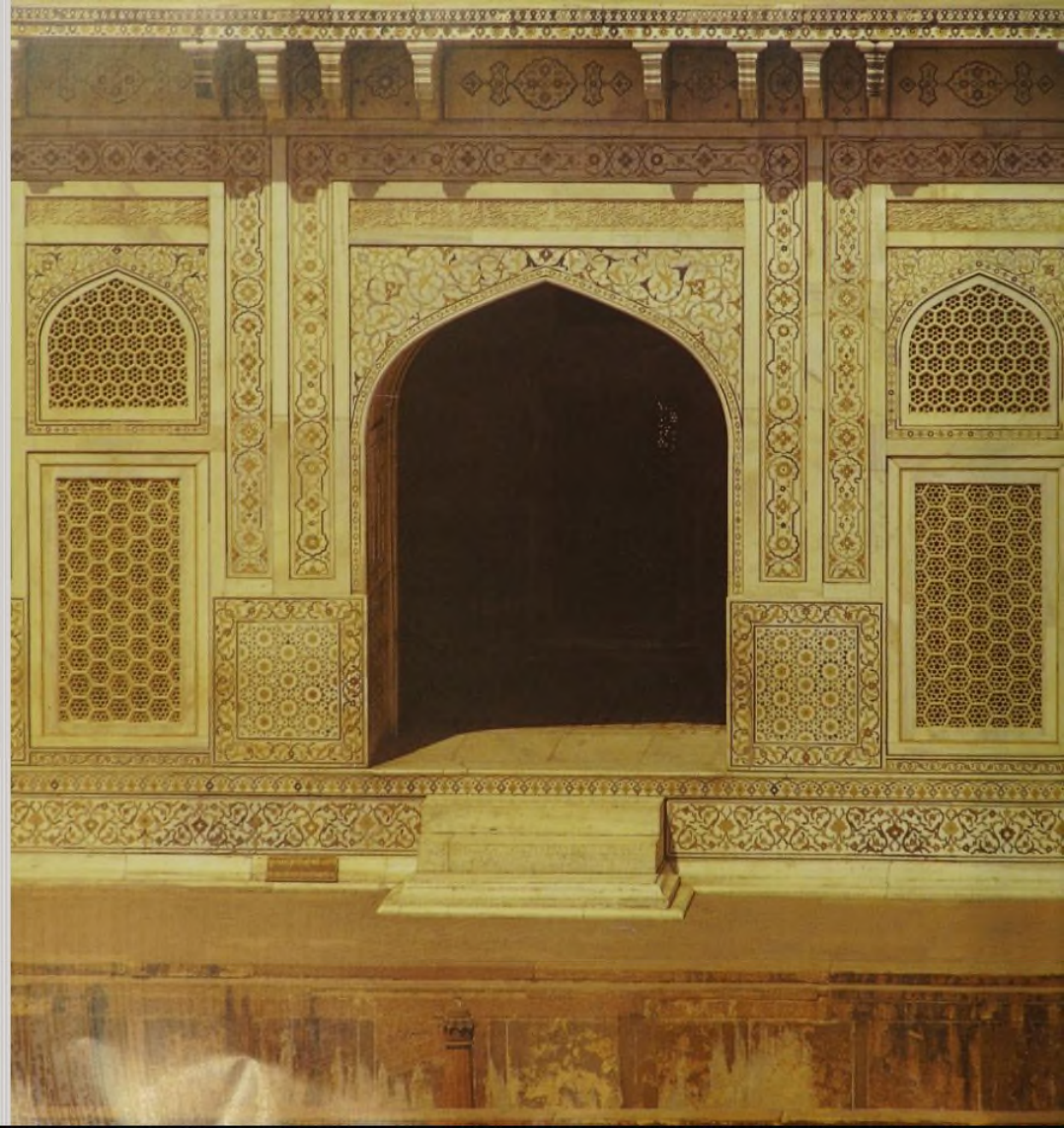
The colossal entrance porch opens on to a domed area with sumptuous stalactites. This may well have been where the Sultan sat in judgement.

Mausoleum of Gawhar Shad
Herat, Afghanistan
Completed by 1432

The dome covering a *madrasa* rises from a sixteen-sided base set on squinches. These are concealed by a decorative vault system composed of plaster stalactites and fan-shaped pendentives painted elaborately in blue and red.

Green Mosque, entrance porch
Bursa, Turkey
c. 1420

The main entrance porch is formed of a canopy of very elaborately worked stalactites. The rich scrollwork of the façade, like the stalactites, evokes the architectural decoration of Seljuk Anatolia.



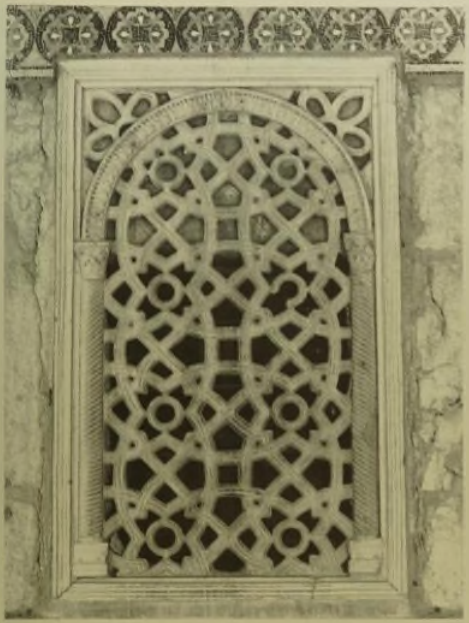
Screens

Although much Islamic architecture was lit from the central courtyard, windows were necessary either for stronger light or as clerestories to emphasize the axial crossing to the *mihrab*. In most Islamic lands, glazed windows were climatically unnecessary and screens generally were of the Byzantine early-Islamic type, at first in marble or limestone but later in moulded stucco, which was cheaper as well as more adaptable. In later Islamic architecture (e.g. in Ottoman Istanbul), light played a much more important part in the architectural aesthetic and windows were often glazed in brilliant colours. Nonetheless, windows rarely play an important part in exterior architectural decoration.

Tomb of I'timad al-Dawla, exterior and interior
Agra, India
1628

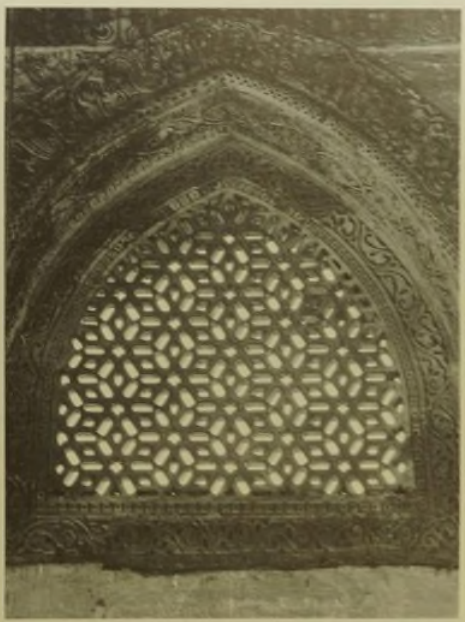
The square building with four prominent corner towers contains a central area divided off by marble screens decorated with geometrically repeating designs. Such screenwork is used most imaginatively in Mughal architecture to increase the feeling of space within enclosures and, by breaking up the light, to make even the most solid architecture seem light and insubstantial.

Interior of the tomb
of I'timad al-Dawla
1628
Agra, India



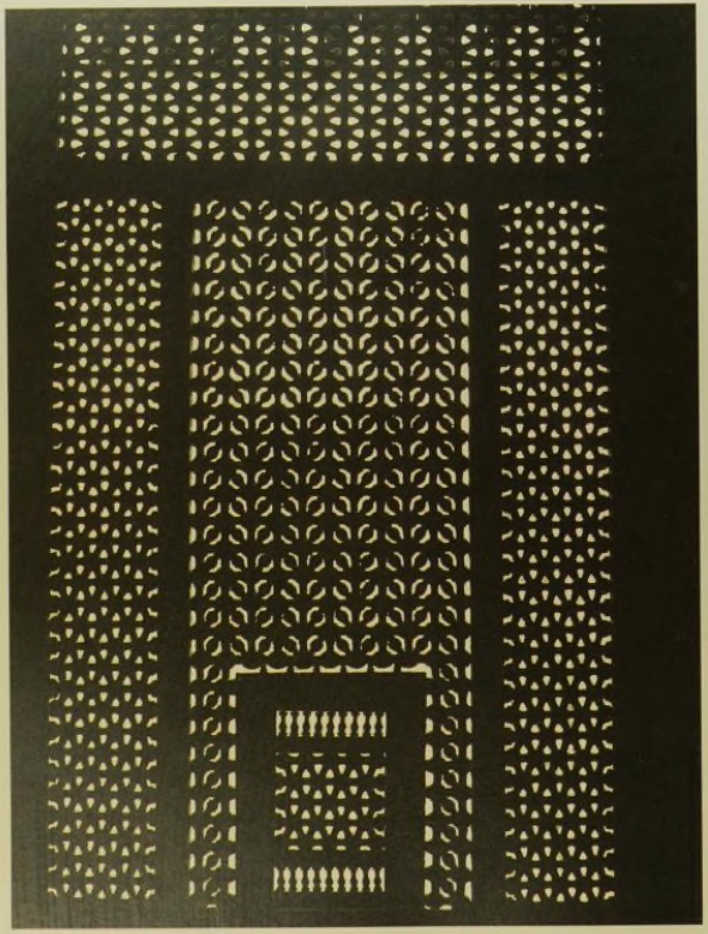
Great Mosque, marble window
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
8th century

The interlace design derives directly from Byzantine marble work.



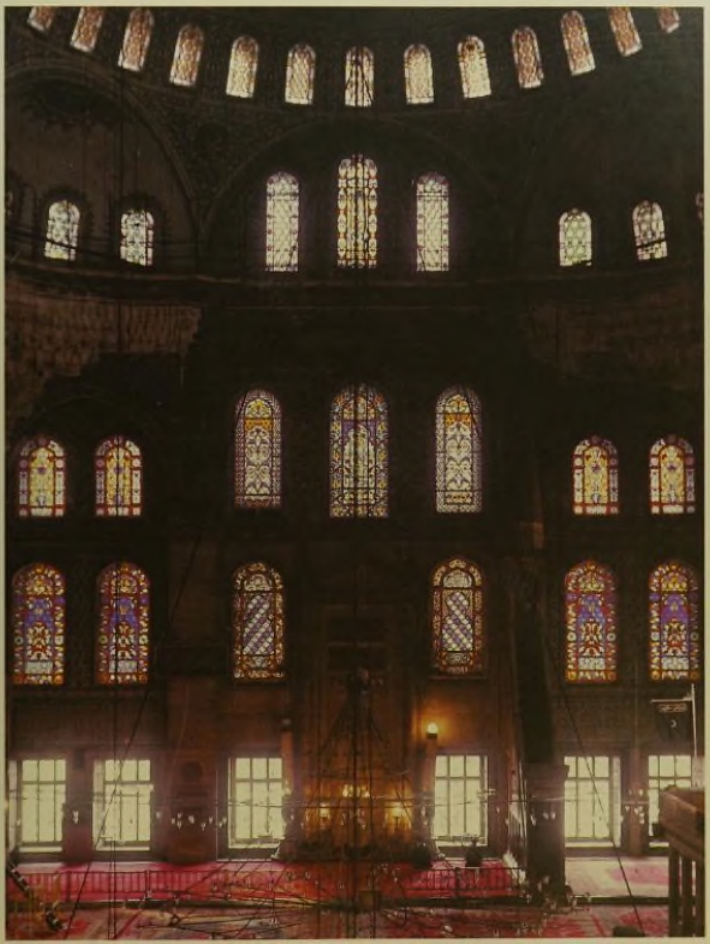
Mosque of Ahmad ibn Tūlūn, stucco windows
Cairo, Egypt
876 or later

Here few if any of the numerous motifs, mainly angular interlace work, are original, but the windows follow the early Islamic tradition in being unglazed.



Palace of Beshtak, *Mashrabiyya*
Cairo, Egypt
c. 1340

Wooden screens, often found on corbelled balconies overlooking the street, are a feature of the domestic architecture of Mamluk Cairo and of much of the modern Middle East. In Cairo the screens allowed the north wind to cool the building (generally creating terrible draughts) and gave a measure of privacy, allowing those inside to look out unobserved.



Mosque of Sultan Ahmed, stucco windows inset with stained glass
Istanbul, Turkey
Early 17th century

These brilliant windows add a further element of colour to the lavish interior of the mosque with its tiled and painted decoration.

Minbars

The principal ceremony held in a mosque is the Friday prayer, which includes the *khutba*, a sermon every adult Muslim male is required to attend. The *khutba* is delivered by the leader of the community or his lawful representative and was, in early Islam at least, as much political as moral in content. This sermon is delivered from a throne or pulpit, the *minbar*, located to the right of the *mihrab*, which came to be highly decorated. In the early days of Islam, the Friday prayer, and hence *minbars*, were restricted to a few towns or localities, although the privilege was accorded in later centuries to a larger number of mosques.

In form, *minbars* are composed of a steep staircase and a decorative entrance placed on a triangular base. They are often surmounted by decorative canopies and in the early centuries of Islam, during the Friday prayer, the leader, or *imam*, was flanked by the banners of the Caliphate. From an early date, the *minbar* was highly decorated with carved wooden panelling, carved marble or limestone, or, more rarely, a tile revetment. The height, number of steps, inclination of the staircase and even presence or absence of the canopy seem to have been dictated by local tradition.

Minbar
Süleymaniye Mosque
Istanbul, Turkey
Completed 1557

Süleyman the Magnificent's greatest foundation built by the famous architect Sinan was intended not just as a mosque but as an educational institution for the higher clergy and the administrative officials of the Ottoman Empire. Only the mosque, however, houses a *minbar*. The slender proportions and great height of the marble *minbar* with carved and gilt openwork and a tall faceted conical canopy have clearly been determined by the height of the edifice.

Great Mosque, wooden *minbar*
Qayrawan, Tunisia
Mid-9th century

One of the most splendid pieces of early Islamic carved panelling, the decoration of this *minbar* comprises stylized palm-trees, vine-scrolls and palmettes and explicitly shows the influence of contemporary Mesopotamian art under the Abbasid Caliphs.

Mosque of Aqsunqur
Cairo, Egypt
1346

The *minbar* is remarkable for its use of white marble with coloured marble and porphyry inlay.

Al-Aqsâ Mosque, *minbar*
Haram, Jerusalem

The *minbar*, recently destroyed, was of panelled and sculpted wood. It was made by a famous family of Syrian woodworkers at the end of the 12th century.

Mosque of Gawhar Shād, interior showing *minbar*
Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran

The *minbar* of thin openwork panelling is a rare masterpiece of 15th-century Persian woodwork.

Mosque of Sokollu Mehmed Pasha
Istanbul, Turkey
1572

The marble *minbar* has been incorporated into the magnificent Iznik tilework which covers the whole of the wall of the *qibla* in the prayer chamber. The *minbar* is crowned by a faceted conical canopy faced with tiles.

Mihrab
Ahwad ibn Tūlūn Mosque
Cairo, Egypt
876

The plain stucco *mihrab* was set so deeply inside the arcades of the *qibla* that prayers must have been inaudible to most of the congregation. Later *mihrabs* were added nearer the courtyard. The present niche was restored in the late 13th century when glass mosaic, marble and painted decoration were added to embellish it.

Mihrabs

The *mihrab*, a niche which architecturally emphasizes the *qibla*, is oriented in the direction of Mecca towards which Muslims turn to say the daily prayers. The Caliph or his representative, as the official leader of prayers (*imam*), stood at or in the *mihrab* and this ceremonial custom encouraged the idea of the *mihrab* as a focus for architectural decoration. The *mihrab*, often enclosed in a domed bay, is decorated with fine mosaic, tile or plaster-work. Needless to say, the *mihrab* is not a sanctuary; there are no particularly holy parts in a mosque.

Great Mosque, *mihrab*
Qayrawan, Tunisia
Decoration from restoration of 862

The openwork marble veneer of the *mihrab* with its panelled scallop-niches is probably the work of local craftsmen; but some or all of the lustre-painted tiles which surround it are imports from the Abbasid Court at Baghdad or Samarra.

Great Mosque,
mihrab and *qibla*
wall
Cordoba, Spain

The early 8th-century building was fully restored in the 960s by the Umayyad ruler al-Hakam II, who added *mihrabs* in the splendidly domed bays of the *qibla* wall. The latter was connected by a corridor to his palace, thereby enabling him to attend the Friday prayer without having to walk through the crowded mosque.

Masjid-i Hauz-i Karbuz
Herat, Afghanistan
1441

The *mihrab*, in the covered 'winter' mosque, is faced with fine tile mosaic of the best quality commissioned by the Timurid rulers.

Mihrab, Nabi Jirgis Mosque, Mausoleum
Mosul, Iraq
14th century and later

Great Mosque, *mihrab* of Öljeytü
Isfahan, Islamic Republic of Iran
1310

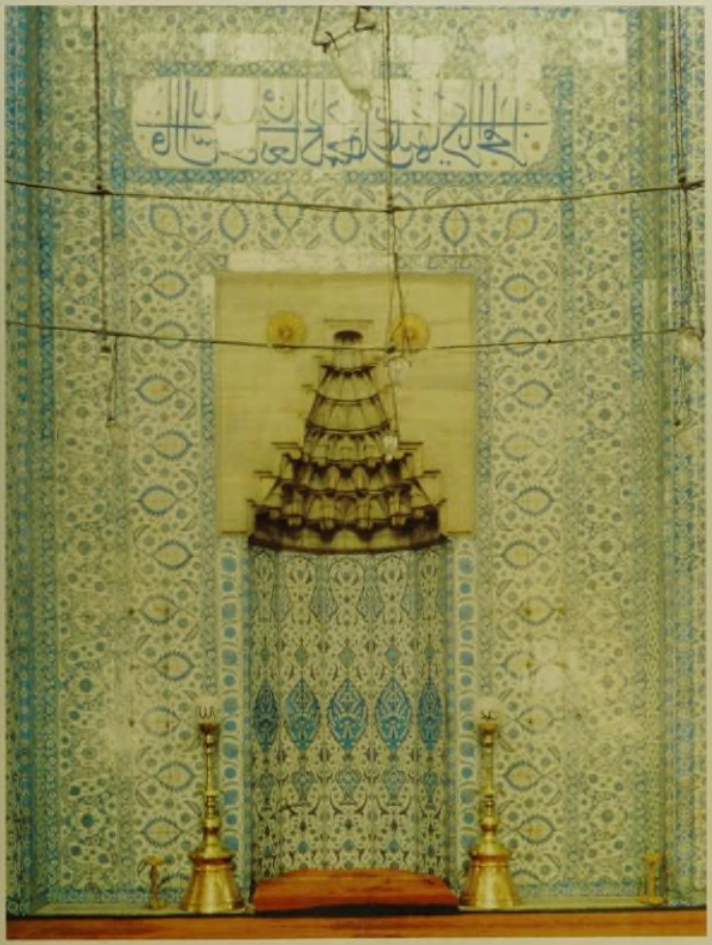
The restoration work carried out on the Great Mosque at Isfahan under the Mongols included a covered or 'winter' mosque with an elaborately carved stucco *mihrab* bearing Shiite formulae and a low carved walnut *minbar*.

Imaret of Ibrahim Beg, tiled *mihrab*
Karaman, Turkey
1433

Now in the Çinili Kosk, Istanbul. The polychrome tiles owe much to work at Bursa (Green Mosque, 1421) and to examples in Eastern Iran (Mashhad).

Woven wall-hanging in the form of a *mihrab*, Mughal, India
c. 1640
Thyssen-Bornemiszá Collection, Lugano

In palaces where there were no mosques or *masjids*, hand-woven or embroidered textiles were frequently used as substitutes for the *mihrab* to indicate the direction for prayers.



Mosque of Rüstem Pasha, tiled *mihrab*
Istanbul, Turkey
c. 1560

The niche is faceted, each facet depicting a vase with a bouquet of prunus blossom set in a lobed panel.

Madrasas

Madrasas were (and still are) the typical Muslim institutions of higher learning, for the teaching of exegeses of the Koran, Muslim tradition and law and a range of subsidiary subjects. From these emerged, after many years of study, the officials appointed to the main legal and administrative positions of the state. The foundation of the *madrasa* is credited sometimes to the Seljuk vizier Nizâm al-Mulk of Baghdad in the late 11th century, but his influence seems to have been limited to bringing *madrasa* education under state control, with lasting effect.

Registan Square, Samarkand, USSR

Of the original buildings, only the *madrasa* of Ulugh Beg shown on the left survives. The square was later reorganized and, in the 17th century, the Shir Dar *madrasa* was built opposite to complement it. The buildings of the Registan are oriented east-west and the *madrasa* therefore does not face the *qibla*. The *madrasa* was dominated by the two-storeyed entrance porch.

Mustansiriyya Madrasa
Baghdad, Iraq
Founded 1233

Laid out on the banks of the Tigris, this *madrasa*, a masterpiece of architecture and decoration, was designed to house the four orthodox legal schools (*madhāhib*) in Islam.

Madrasat al-Firdaws
Aleppo, Syrian Islamic Republic
1234-37

The sober arcades of the courtyard are crowned by marble or limestone capitals. The marble paving is recent, but gives an idea of the skill of the stone-masons of Aleppo.

Gök Medrese
Sivas, Turkey
Founded 1271-72

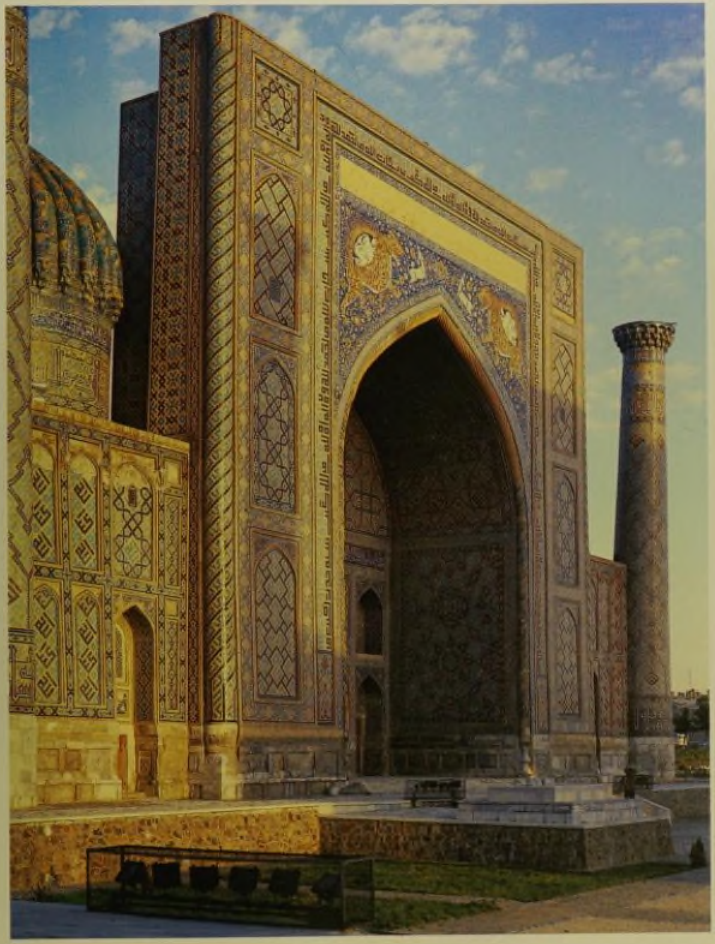
The grandiose façade, with an entrance porch faced with marble and topped by twin minarets, is disproportionally large in comparison to the *madrasa* building, which had room for 20 staff and students at most.

Ashrafiyya Mosque and *Madrasa*
Ta'izz, Yemen
13th and 14th centuries

Originally the *madrasa* was attached to the mosque and had two grand minarets on the south side. In the late 14th century, classrooms were added to either side of the south porch.

Madrasa of al-'Altârîn
Fez, Morocco
Completed in 1325

The plan is typical of many *madrasas* which are not axially oriented to Mecca. The carved wood and sculpted plaster decoration of the courtyard is as rich as the tilework.



Madrasa Shir Dar, Registan
Samarkand, USSR
17th century

This *madrasa* was built to complement the *madrasa* of Ulugh Beg (1417-20) on the opposite side of the square. It was an important institution where both mathematics and astronomy were taught in the 15th century.

Chapter 3

Masterpieces of Islamic Art

The First Golden Age: The Umayyads and Early Abbasids

In the early 7th century Muhammad in Mecca received the revelation of his call to be the Prophet of God. The conquests of his successors, the Umayyad Caliphs, in the following century brought into being an Arab Muslim Empire which included Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Iraq and Iran.

In the year 661, the seat of the Caliphate moved from Arabia to the ancient city of Damascus in Syria, which had been a Roman and then a Byzantine capital. It remained the capital of the Umayyad dynasty until 750 and, initially at least, the Arabic character of this state was quite marked: Arabic became the language of administration which coined new legal and intellectual terms. The Umayyads expanded rapidly, conquering North-West Africa (670), Spain and Sind (711), and even (by the 730s) Southern France.

The Damascus Caliphate thus became a world power.

In 750 an opposing movement led by the Abbasids overthrew the last Umayyad Caliph. They transferred their capital to Mesopotamia and founded Baghdad on the Tigris; Spain remained independent. Over the next two hundred years, their control over a vast area from Gibraltar to the eastern confines of Central Asia gradually slackened. Semi-independent dynasties arose in North Africa; in the late 10th century, Iran fell to the Shiite Buyids; in 969 the Fatimids took control of much of Syria after gaining power in Egypt, where they founded Cairo.

With political change came shifts of geographical emphasis. Umayyad art and architecture, which had evolved in the wake

Dome of the Rock
Jerusalem
691

Built by the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. The shrine at the centre of what is known as the Haram al-Sharîf was built over the sacred rock from which the Prophet was believed to have made his ascension to heaven (the Mi'râjt or Night Journey).

of the Mediterranean classical tradition, gave way to the Mesopotamian and Iranian traditions fostered by the early Abbasids.

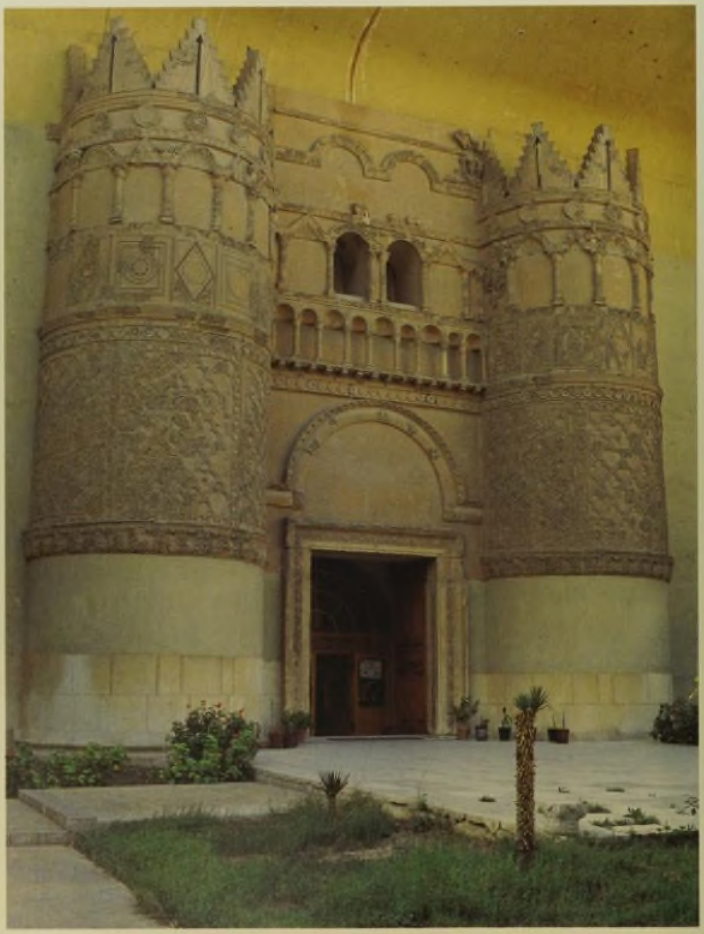
Although today virtually nothing remains of Abbasid Baghdad, the ruins of Samarra (founded by the Caliphs as a refuge from their Turkish troops) show the vast scale of Abbasid architecture: the colossal mosque of al-Mutawakkil (died 861) and the Great Palace of al Mu'tasim (836), the Jawsaq al-Khâqânî. In the latter, fine wall paintings, stucco, pottery and glassware excavated in the present century show the refinement and technical mastery of Abbasid art. Under Ahmad ibn Tûlûn, the Abbasid governor of Egypt and Syria who established his own dynasty, the Tûlûnids (868-905), the splendours of Abbasid metropolitan art and architecture were taken to Egypt.

Great Mosque
Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic
714-15

Built by the Caliph al-Walîd ibn 'Abd al-Malik. Interior view showing the Bayt al-Mal (treasury) and the arcades surrounding the courtyard.

The mosaic may represent
the Barada River
and the gardens of paradise.

Qasr al-Hayr al Gharbīr,
entrance porch
North-east of Damascus,
Syrian Arab Republic
Built by the Umayyed Caliph
Hishām in 727.



Wooden panel with stylized foliate motifs
Mesopotamia
9th century
British Museum, London

The carving is typical of the developed style of Samarra decoration.

Exterior decoration in carved stucco on the main entrance to the palace

Restored
National Museum, Damascus

Dish with moulded decoration and covered with a yellow lustre with touches of green
Diameter 215 cm
Syria
9th century
Staatliche Museen für Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin/Dahlem

Constellation Perseus as it appears in the sky. 'Kitâb Suwar al-Kawâkib al-Thâbita'. Treatise on the Fixed Stars by the astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sûfî
Bodleian Library, Oxford

Koran executed by the famous
Iraqi calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwâb
Dated 1001
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

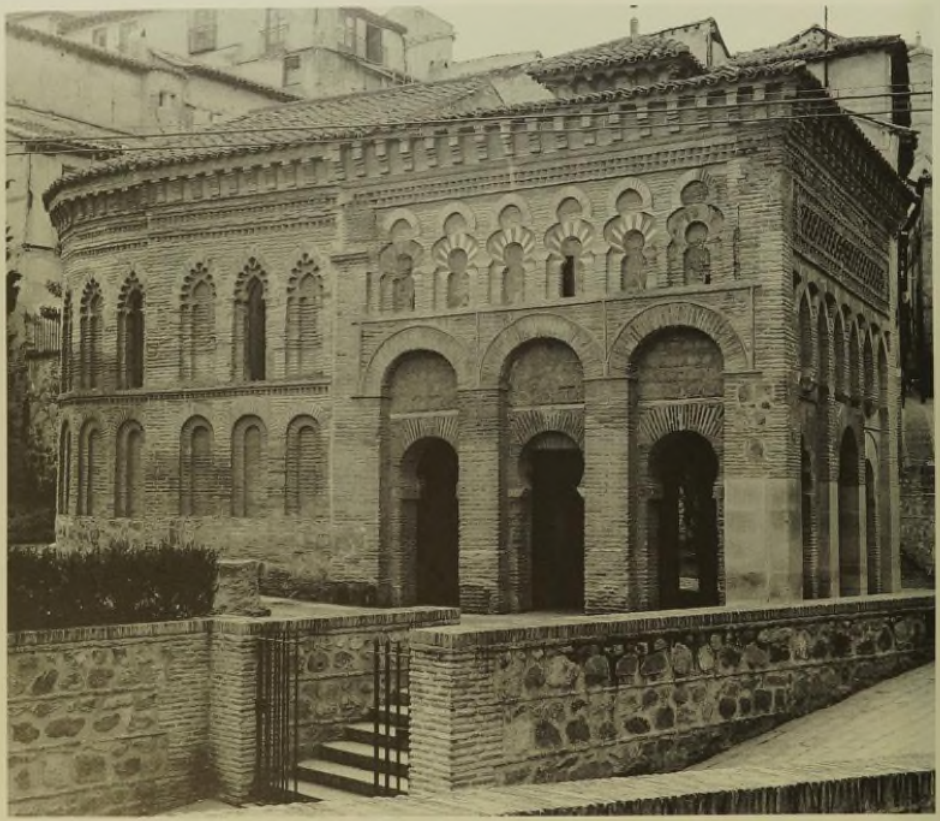
Spain, Morocco and Algeria

The Umayyads, who had conquered Spain in 711, survived the Abbasid revolution and under 'Abd al-Rahmân (756-788) founded an independent Umayyad state with its capital at Cordoba. The Great Mosque of Cordoba was built during his reign.

'Abd al-Rahmân III took the title of Caliph in 929 and founded the palace-city of Madînat al-Zahrâ (936-945) with its Great Mosque (941). During the reign of Ibn Ja'far al-Muqtadir (1046-81) the Aljafería Palace was constructed in Zaragoza.

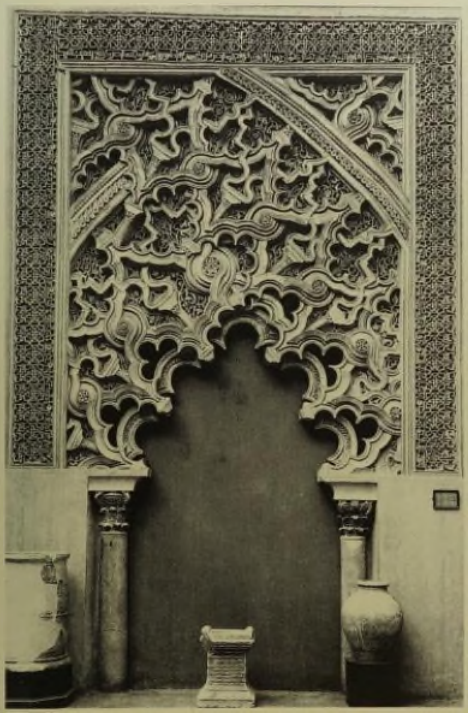
An independent dynasty, the Aghlabids, ruled in the 9th century in Tunisia, where the capital at Qayrawan was founded by Uqba 'Nafi in 670. The Idrisids of Morocco in 789 founded Fez, a capital as grand as Qayrawan and Cordoba. In the 10th century, the Fatimids founded the town of Mahdiyya in Tunisia, whence they launched their invasion of Egypt in 969. In Algeria, local dynasties like the Zirids based at Ashir and the Hammadids based at the fortress of Qal'at of the Bani Hammad, although politically ephemeral, were patrons of the Islamic arts. Later, the Almoravids established themselves in Marrakesh in 1062 and proceeded to gain control of the western Maghrib and much of Spain. Less than a century later, however, after a seventeen-year campaign, the Almoravid capital Marrakesh fell to the Almohad prince 'Abd al-Mu'min in 1147, and this marked the zenith of the Almohads' power.

Great Mosque, façade
Cordoba, Spain



Mosque
Toledo, Spain 999

Today the church of El Cristo de la Luz, built by Mûsâ ibn 'Alî. Exterior view from the North-west.



Carved stucco arch from the
Aljafería
Zaragoza, Spain
1049-1081

The palace was built by the ruler
Ahmad al-Muqtadir.
Museo Argueologico National,
Madrid

Mosque of al-Qarāwiyyin
Fez, Morocco
11th century
Stalactite dome before the
mihrab.

Great Mosque of Tinmâl
Morocco
1153-54

An Almohad building restored by the ruler 'Abd al-Mu'min.

Court of the Lions, Alhambra Palace
Granada, Spain
1354-91

Built by the Nasrid ruler Muhammad V.

Ivory box
Cordoba, Spain
968
Musée du Louvre, Paris
Inscribed with the name of a son of the Caliph 'Abd al-Rahmân III.

Wooden casket with ivory panels and ivory with cloisonné enamel
Cuenca, Spain
Dated 1049-50
Museo Argueologico Nacional, Madrid
Made by 'Abd al-Rahmân ibn Zayyan for the chamberlain Husâm al Dawla Ismâ'îl, son of al-Ma'Mûn, king of Toledo and governor of Cuenca in New Castile.

'Sword of Boabdil'
Granada, Spain
Late 15th century
Staatliche Kunstammlungen
Kassel

Steel sheath decorated with gilt and bronze mounts and with gold filigree and enamelwork.

Silk cloth with medallions and eight-pointed stars of angular interlaces

Southern Spain or North Africa
Nasrid period, 14th century
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Western and Central Lands of the Islamic World during the High Middle Ages

The Great Mosque and the University of Theology of Al-Azhar
Cairo, Egypt
Founded in 972

Initially the institution was created to spread Fatimid propaganda, but with the fall of the Fatimids it was devoted to the teaching of orthodox Islam. Today it is the most famous Muslim educational institution. The view shows the façade and the minarets that were added by the later Mamluk Sultans.

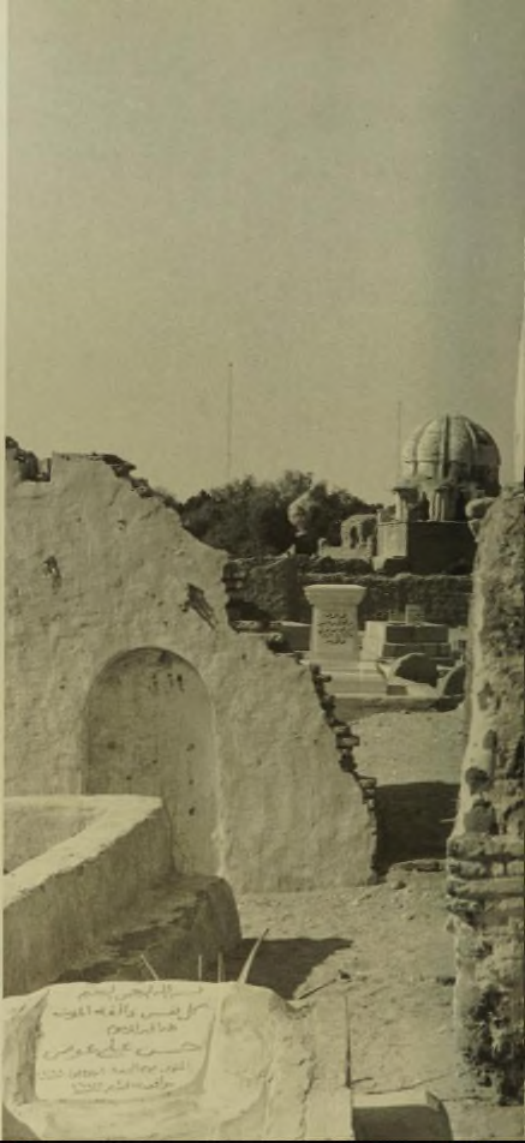
Between 969 and 1169, the heterodox and fiercely proselytizing Fatimid dynasty which arose in Tunisia reigned supreme in Egypt and for a time in parts of Syria and Palestine. Their first capital was at Mahdiyya in Tunisia, but they also occupied Qayrawan, restoring *inter alia* the painted ceilings of the Great Mosque. In the mid-11th century, Tunisia was devastated by nomadic raids, and architecture was temporarily brought to a halt.

In Egypt, the Fatimids founded a new capital, Cairo, originally with mud-brick walls, where they had their palace and their Great Mosque, al-Azhar. Among the many buildings they erected was the vast mosque of al-Hakîm, which in the late 11th century was brought within massive stone walls. In the south of Egypt the frontier trading city of Aswan prospered, and its medieval cemetery is one of the most important surviving from mediaeval Islam. No Fatimid Korans or illuminated manuscripts have been identified, although their palace library was famous. They also patronized the minor arts–wood and ivory carving, glass and lustre-painted pottery.

With the rule of Saladin and the collapse of the Fatimids in 1169, unity was restored to Islam, although the Maghrib henceforth developed independently within the traditions established by earlier dynasties in Morocco and southern Spain. At the same time, Yemen and Hijaz became prominent again because of trade and patronage: Syrian stonemasons travelled throughout the Islamic world and pottery, woodwork, illumination and the arts of the book assumed an

international style. Enamelled glass made in Syria and Egypt was especially popular, and was exported via the Rasulid dynasty in Yemen even as far as China.

The Mongol invasion, which put an end to the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad in 1258, turned Syria and Egypt, then under the domination of the Mamluks, back towards the Mediterranean. By 1300, Baybars and his successors, Qalâwûn and al-Nâsir Muhammad, had united the two countries and had put an end to the Christian crusader states in Syria and Palestine. They were great builders, restoring and developing the Hejaz and influencing grand architecture in Yemen. For the endowments of their mosques and other pious foundations, they commissioned magnificent large-scale illuminated Korans, although their personal taste ran to war manuals and illustrated books of automata. In the period up to the Ottoman conquest in 1516-17, Cairo and Damascus assumed the glory which Baghdad had enjoyed earlier as the capital of the Caliphate.



Mediaeval cemetery
Aswan, Egypt
11th-14th centuries

Brick-domed mausoleums are typical of Fatimid architecture in 11th to 12th-century Cairo. Some have elegantly ribbed domes and carved plaster *mihrabs*. Originally the exterior was plastered and had fluted transitional zones.

Lustre dish
Fatimid period, Egypt
11th century
Benaki Museum, Athens

The surface is decorated with two Kufic votive inscription bands.

Boat-shaped rock-crystal lamp
Fatimid period, Egypt
c. 1000
Hermitage Museum, Leningrad

The continuous acanthus scroll pattern recalls the late 7th-century Umayyad mosaics at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

'Hedwig glass'
probably from Syrian Arab Republic
Late Fatimid period, *c.* 1150
British Museum, London

The glass, carved in relief, is incised with a lion, griffin and a spread eagle.

Book of Antidotes (Kitâb al-Diryâq)
Probably from Mosul
1199
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Illuminated frontispiece
Koran, Iraq
1289
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The Wonders of Creation
('Ajâ 'ib al-Makhlûqât)
Iraq
1280
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich

Angels hold the Great Book of the good and bad deeds of men.

Maqâmât of al-Harîrî
Baghdad, Iraq
1237

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Celebration of the end of Ramadan.

Tray of beaten brass inlaid with silver
Mosul
c. 1233-59
Staatliches Museum für Volkerkunde, Munich

Made for the household of Badr al-Dîn Lu'lu, ruler of Mosul. The decoration includes figures of the seven planets and medallions of hunting scenes, dancers, wrestlers, animal combats and mythological creatures. The tray is part of the loot taken by the Elector of Bavaria, Max Emmanuel, at the recapture of Buda in 1686.

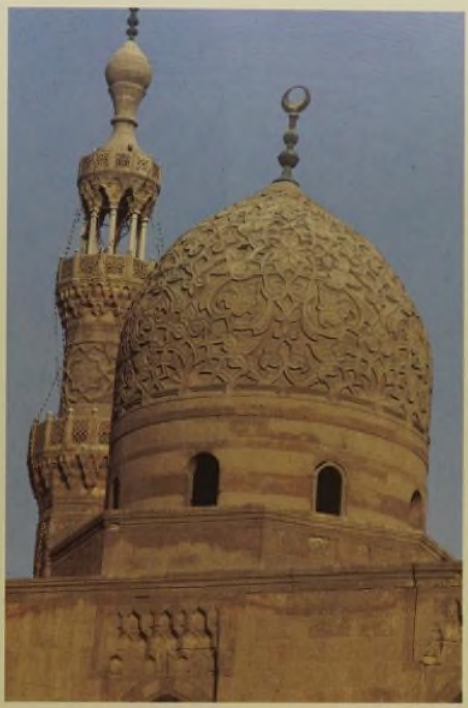
Great Mosque
San'a, Yemen

Mosque of Baybars I, monumental entrance
Cairo, Egypt
1264

The mosque, now in ruins, was decorated originally with marble acquired as booty by the armies of Baybars in their campaigns against the Crusaders in Palestine and Syria.

Funerary foundation of Khayrbak
Cairo, Egypt
Early 16th century

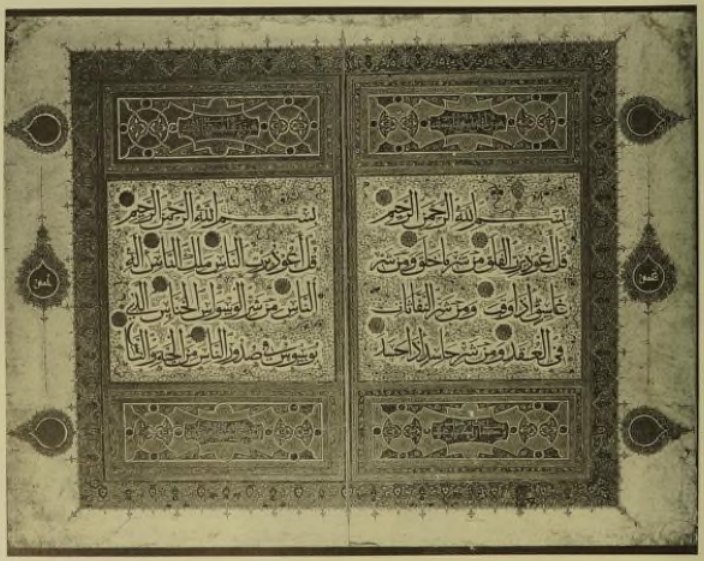
The founder's domed mausoleum occupies a conspicuous place, as was characteristic of pious foundations of Mamluk Egypt.



Ashrafiyya madrasa-mosque
Ta'izz, Yemen
14th-15th centuries

The painting in the dome, in gilt and polychrome, was strongly influenced by contemporary Mamluk decorative painting.

Koran, Suras I and II with illumination in gold and blue
Syrian Arab Republic
Late 13th century
National Museum, Damascus



Two pages of the Koran, Suras CXIII-CXIV
c. 1400
Probably came from Mamluk Cairo. Its style is indebted to Tabriz illumination of the early 14th century.
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

Treatise on Automata or Book of Knowledge of Mechanical Devices of al-Jazarī (Kitâb fī Ma rifat al-Hiyal al-Handasiyya)
Elephant Clock
Syrian Arab Republic
1315
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Bowl of beaten brass inlaid with silver
Syria or Egypt
Early 14th century
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figures of the seven planets decorate the base, while medallions of drinkers, musicians and animal combats adorn the sides.

Enamelled and gilt glass mosque lamp
Syrian Arab Republic or Egypt
Musée du Louvre, Paris
14th century

This lamp bears the name of the Mamluk Sultan al-Nâsir Muhammad (died 1341).

Carpet
Damascus or more probably Cairo
c. 1500
Osterreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna

Anatolia, the Iranian World, and Central Asia in the Later Middle Ages

The disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate was most serious in Iran and Central Asia where, by the late 9th century, the Samanid dynasty, with capitals at Nishapur and Bukhara, reintroduced Persian as an official language. Western Iran was controlled by the Buwayhids, a Shiite dynasty, who also looked to their Iranian past. Subsequently, Central Asia was ruled by Turkish dynasties of pagan nomads, like the Karakhanids, the Ghaznavids, the Seljuks and the Khwarazmshahs, all of whom converted to Islam and took over their predecessors' capitals, Merv, Nishapur, Ghazna and Isfahan. The 11th century saw an expansion into Northern India, first by means of military campaigns which may have had no lasting effect. But towards the end of the 12th century, under the Ghurids from Afghanistan, Delhi became the first of many Muslim imperial capitals in North India. The Seljuks, although their power soon disintegrated, left behind in 13th century Anatolia a style of architecture which is one of the glories of Islamic civilization.

The architecture of these dynasties obviously reflected the influence of the Baghdad Caliphate, the religious authority of which they generally recognized. Northern India (*c.* 1200) and Seljuk Anatolia preserve the best architectural examples where, for the most part, buildings were constructed in lavishly carved stone. Towns had their Great Mosques, *madrasas* and other religious foundations (palaces have survived less well), and all were linked by chains of often luxuriously appointed caravanserais. This period also saw the

Mausoleum of Ismā'īl the Samanid
Bukhara, USSR
c. 907

This domed square displays one of the earliest and most spectacular uses of brick in Iranian architectural decoration, and brick patterns appear inside and outside the building.

introduction of colour in architecture, first as turquoise inscription bands then as tile mosaic, in turquoise, cobalt and black.

The coming of the Mongols in 1218-58 threw this part of the Islamic world into disarray. Much was destroyed, including the Abbasid Caliphate (1258), but more serious was the lack of stability engendered by the constant campaigns of the Mongols, which, in Central Asia, lasted into the 14th century. By the later 13th century, the Mongols in Mesopotamia and Iran (the Il-Khans) had settled urban areas and in 1296 under Ghāzān Khan they became Muslim. He brought builders, tileworkers and woodworkers to Tabriz from all over his domains and patronized a revival of the arts of the book which had survived in Baghdad under its Muslim governors. Hence, partly in deliberate competition with the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria, the Mongols created Tabriz as an artistic capital, renowned for its magnificently illuminated Korans and illustrated books. But all over Iran, from Mashhad to Isfahan, fine Islamic architecture arose, and the desire to revive the grand Seljuk tradition was manifest.

Karatay Medrese, interior
Konya, Turkey
1251-52

The decoration of the central dome and walls consists of geometric designs in turquoise, cobalt and black tile mosaic.

Great Mosque and hospital, west porch
Divriği, Turkey
1228 or later

The extremely varied carving, inside and out, makes this complex unique in Anatolian architectural decoration.

Tomb of Mu'miye Khatun
Nakhichwan, USSR
12th century

The panels are abundantly covered with arabesques and Kufic inscriptions.

Great Mosque of Ashtarjan
Isfahan oasis, Islamic Republic of Iran
1315

The tall entrance is surmounted by two minarets and faced with glazed terra-cotta and tile mosaic in a style characteristic of Iranian monumental architecture of the early 14th century.

Pages of the Koran written in muhaqqaq by Muhammad Ibn Aybak al-Baghdad for the Mongol Il-Khan Öljeytü
1307
Topkapi, Palace Museum, Istanbul
Lines of black and gold script alternate on the unframed pages.

Koran pages, Sura IV, 147-169,
Eastern Kufic
12th century
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

Bier of Alexander the Great
Shāhnāme (Book of Kings), known as the Demotte Shāhnāme
Tabriz, Islamic Republic of Iran
c. 1340
Freer Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.

A splendid example of tragic expression in Muslim painting.

Slip-painted glazed dish
Nishapur, Islamic Republic of Iran
10th century
Musée du Louvre, Paris

The Kufic inscription on the border transcribes the following saying: 'The beginning of Knowledge is bitter to taste, but the end is sweeter than honey. Peace be (to the owner)'.

Dish painted in lustre over a white glaze (probably Kashan)
Islamic Republic of Iran
c. 1200
David Collection, Copenhagen

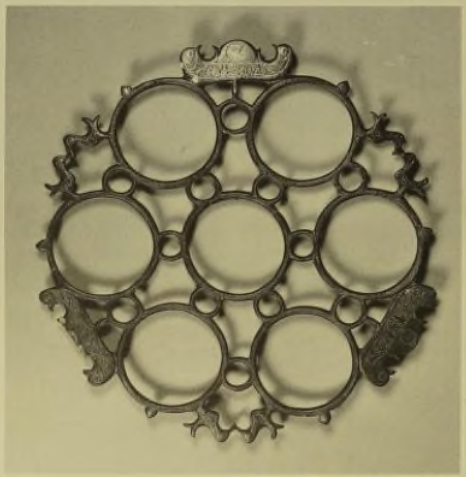
A teacher is surrounded by his pupils.

Tiles in the form of stars and
crosses (probably Kashan)
Islamic Republic of Iran
1267
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Beaker with enamel decoration
over a white glaze
(probably Kashan)
Islamic Republic of Iran
c. 1200
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Cast bronze door-knocker in the form of two opposing dragons from the Great Mosque at Cizre, Eastern Turkey
c. 1200
David Collection, Copenhagen

Cast bronze candelabra with handles in the form of stylized birds, inlaid with silver and copper, Iran
Late 12th century
Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore



Silk decorated with eagles and bearing the name of ʿAlâ al-Dîn Kayqubâad
Anatolia
Seljuk period, 13th century
Musée Historique des Tissus, Lyons

Seljuk carpet, discovered in the Alaeddin Mosque
Konya, Turkey
13th century

This is one of the oldest knotted carpets extant.
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul

The Great Empires: Timurid, Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal

In 1370, Timur, or Tamerlane, a Barlas Turk, gained control of Samarkand. From this base he launched campaigns against Iran and the Near East, and then India, and was on his way to China when he died in 1405. These campaigns were overwhelmingly destructive, but his conquests were always followed by the deportation of craftsmen to develop Samarkand as his capital. Much of the architecture he ordered was built too fast, too high and is now in ruins, but his grandiose constructions inspired his son, Shah Rukh, and his grandson, Ulugh Beg, to build more permanently. The latter's buildings in Samarkand include a *madrasa* where the curriculum included mathematics, and an observatory which produced a new set of star-tables used later by the great European Renaissance astronomers. The power of Timur's successors was most firmly established in Central Asia in Samarkand and Bukhara, and in Herat in Afghanistan. The arts were particularly well patronized. Much of Iran remained disputed territory, and although Timur's descendants at Shiraz maintained a firm hold, they faced the growing power of two great Turkoman confederations: the Empire of the Black Sheep (Karakoyunlu) and that of the White Sheep (Akkoyunlu) who occupied both Baghdad and Tabriz. In 1500, Herat was faced with the threat of a new Turkic dynasty, the Uzbeks, who made Bukhara their capital, while Western Iran was threatened by the Safavids, militant Shiites, who originally were Sufis from Ardebil. In 1520 under Shah Ismā'īl I, Iran was united and the capital was successively at Tabriz, Qazvin and Isfahan. Under

Mausoleum of Ahmad Yassavi, Timurid restorations
Turkestan, USSR
1397

Ahmad Yassavi (died 1166) was the founder of an important Sufi order, and Tamerlane honoured his memory with this gigantic building comprising a buttressed entrance *iwan*, which heralded a massive rectangular domed building beyond which was the Saint's tomb.

Shah 'Abbas I (died 1629) Isfahan was replanned entirely, with a palace, a great central square and grandstand for watching polo matches, a grand entrance to the bazaars, and two mosques, that of Sheik Lutfallāh and that of Shah 'Abbas. With its gorgeous tile revetments inside and out, the mosque of Shah 'Abbas enshrines one of the Islamic ideals of architecture as the art of surface decoration.

From the beginning, the Safavids came into violent conflict with the orthodox Sunni Ottomans. Originally from a small emirate in Western Turkey with a capital at Bursa, the Ottomans rapidly expanded, by marriage and conquest, into the Balkans and subdued their neighbours. Their defeat at Ankara by Timur in 1401 was only a minor set-back: in 1453 Constantinople fell to Mehmed the Conqueror, and by 1530 Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and the Balkans as far as Budapest were under their control. The empire remained an important European power until the 19th century and counts as one of the longest-lived of all Muslim states. Its greatest period, however, was probably from 1453 to 1600, when Constantinople (Istanbul) attracted craftsmen from all over Europe and the Islamic world. Splendid mosques were built by the famous architect Sinan at Edirne, Istanbul and all over the Ottoman empire; Korans and illustrated chronicles were executed in the palace workshops; and the potteries at Iznik and the court carpet and textile manufactures at Bursa, Uşak and Istanbul were in full production.

The Mughals traced their ancestry to Timur. Bābur, the founder of the dynasty, was driven away from Samarkand and settled in India. His son, Humāyūn, spent most of his reign at the Safavid court, where, by good fortune, he attracted court painters into his service. Not until the 1570s did Akbar finally subdue the Muslim dynasties established on the sub-continent and the rest of the Northern Indian non-Muslim states. By the late 16th century the Mughals were supreme, with a newly founded capital at Fatehpur Sikri (now abandoned). Under Akbar's successors, Jāhangīr and Shah Jahān, the Mughal capitals of Lahore, Agra and Delhi were replanned and grand architectural ensembles like the Taj Mahal created.

Madrasa Ghiyâthiyya
Khargird, Islamic Republic of Iran
Dated 1444

Founded by a vizier of Shah Rukh, the son of Tamerlane, the brick building has a grand entrance and four courtyard *iwans* while the lecture rooms and prayer chambers are at the corners. The tile mosaic decoration bears the signature of one of the most famous Timurid architects of the early 15th century, Qavan al-Din.

Sufis discoursing in a garden,
Khamsa of Mir 'Alî Shîr Navâî
Herat, Afghanistan
1495
Bodleian Library, Oxford

Page of stylized calligraphy,
based on the name 'Alî
repeated four times
Baghdad, Iraq
15th century
Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library,
Album H. 2152

The polychrome calligraphy on a brilliant red background carries the angular tendencies of Timurid stylized calligraphy to its limits.

Nasta'liq calligraphy by Sultan 'Ali Mashhadi, taken from an anthology (the Makhzan al-Asrār), Tabriz
Dated 1478
Spencer Collection, New York Public Library

Executed in black ink on pale blue Chinese paper with drawings of architecture and landscapes in gold.

Binding, inner cover, Divan (collected poems)
Sultan Ahmad Jalāir, Baghdad
1406-07
Turkish and Islamic Art Museum, Istanbul

Brown leather tooled and gilt with filigree medallions and corner-pieces on dark blue. Such bindings were the source of Renaissance Italian bindings and very probably of contemporary European 'arabesque' designs.

Treatise on the Fixed Stars (Kitâb Suwar al-Kawâkib al-Thâbita) copied for Ulugh Beg and his observatory at Samarkand, probably at Herat
c. 1430
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

The Constellation Draco is depicted as it appears in the sky and on a globe.

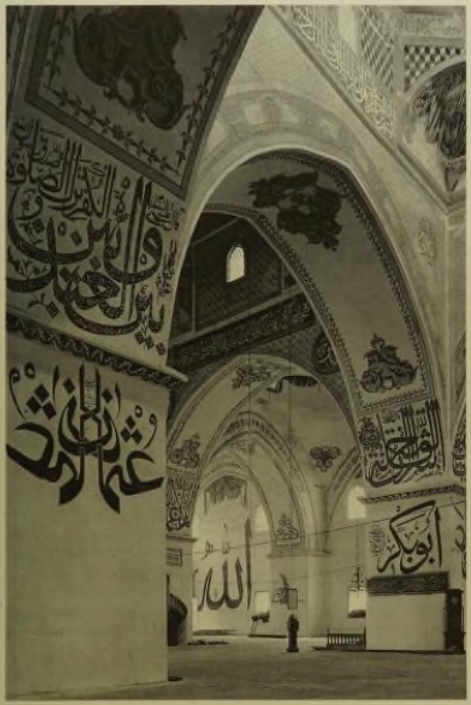
Silk
Iran or Central Asia
14th century
West Berlin, Staatliche Museen für Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstgewerbemuseum

This silk, brocaded with gold thread, is decorated with medallions of opposing eagles separated by dragons of Chinese inspiration.

Tiled cenotaph of the Green Mosque
Bursa, Turkey
1414-24

Founded in 1414 by Çelebi Sultan Mehmed and completed in 1424 by the Ottoman Sultan Murad II, the mosque and tomb are renowned for their superb faience.

Mihrab with tiles representing the Kaa ʿba
Istanbul, Turkey
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul



Ottoman monumental calligraphy,
Old Mosque (Eski Cami)
Edirne, Turkey
16th century

Fountain of Ahmed III
Istanbul, Turkey
1728

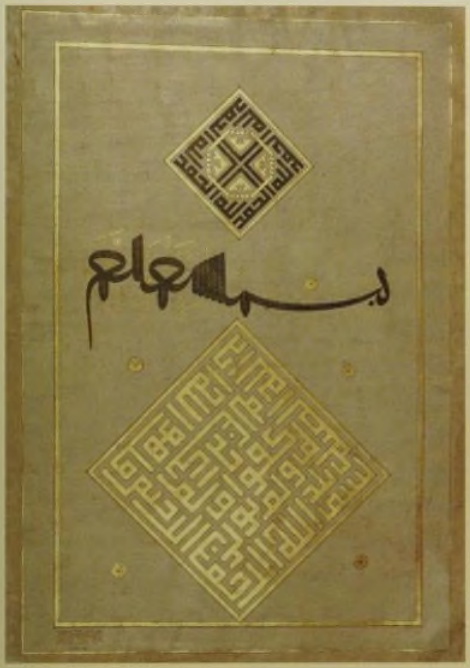
Portrait of Mehmed II, who conquered Istanbul in 1453, painted by Sinan Beg
Second half of the 15th century
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul

Koran fragment associated with Bayazit II
1481-1512
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

The text in the central panel is in *naskhī* script and is set on a background of arabesques and foliate motifs.

Imperial monogram (*tuğra*) of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent
1521-66
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul

Executed in blue and gold and surrounded with a triangular scroll.



The looped script of Ahmed Karahisarî
16th century
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul

Karahisarî's works include sumptuously illuminated Korans, like those consecrated in the Mosque of Süleymaniye.

Virgin and Child, *Fālnāme* of Kalender Pasha
Istanbul, Turkey
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul

The Virgin and Child are depicted here with fiery haloes, according to Muslim conventions.

Observatory at Tophane
Shâhanshâhnâme (Book of the King of Kings)
1580
University Library, Istanbul

Sultan Murad III founded an observatory at Tophane in 1579. Here we see the staff of the observatory with globes and other astronomical instruments.

Mosque lamp
Iznik, Turkey
1549
British Museum, London

This lamp is from the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and attests to the restoration projects carried out in the Holy Land under Süleyman the Magnificent.

Ottoman Court Carpet
Istanbul, Turkey
Late 16th century
Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna

Patterns were made by the court designers for carpets, Ottoman illumination, book bindings, textiles and tiles.

Velvet cushion cover,
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul
Early 17th century

The cover was made of silk and metal threads and is decorated with stylized carnations.

King Nūshīrwān and the Owls, *Khamsa* (the five poems) of Nizāmī,
Tabriz
c. 1540
British Library, London

The king learns from overhearing the owls boast about the destruction of his kingdom that a wise ruler must also be just.

Koran, Suras I, 1-II, 4
1538-39
Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul

Page written by Shāh Mahmūd al-Naysābūrī, the favourite calligrapher of the Safavid Shāh, Tahmāsp.

Bookbinding, stamped and gilt
leather with cut-out tracery over
patches of coloured paper
Islamic Republic of Iran
possibly Isfahan
17th century
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Drawing of a pheasant in ink
and gold wash with its head
in five positions
Islamic Republic of Iran
c. 1550
British Museum, London

Garden Carpet
Western Iran
c. 1800 after 18th-century design
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

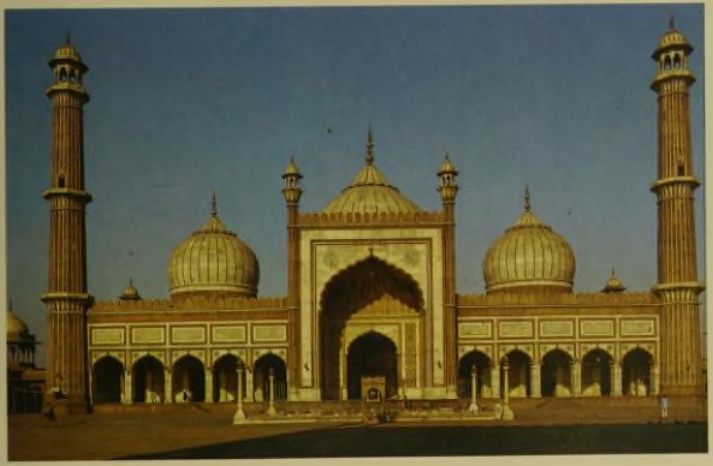
With a broad canal on the vertical axes, the water is indicated by diagonal lines and fishes. There are three horizontal canals: where they cross there are basins with peach trees. The rectangles are filled with star-shaped flower beds and stylized trees, the borders of the plots seem to be espalier-trained fruit trees.

Wool carpet from the Shrine of Shaykh Safī at Ardebil, Tabriz, Islamic Republic of Iran
1539-40
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The deep blue field is dominated by a central sixteen-pointed medallion with smaller medallions arranged around it.

Shait Gumbad Mosque, exterior
Khalifatabad, near Bagerhat,
Bangladesh
15th century

Fortress-like in its appearance, the mosque is roofed with seventy-seven domed bays. The *qibla* wall is set with eleven richly decorated *mihrabs*.

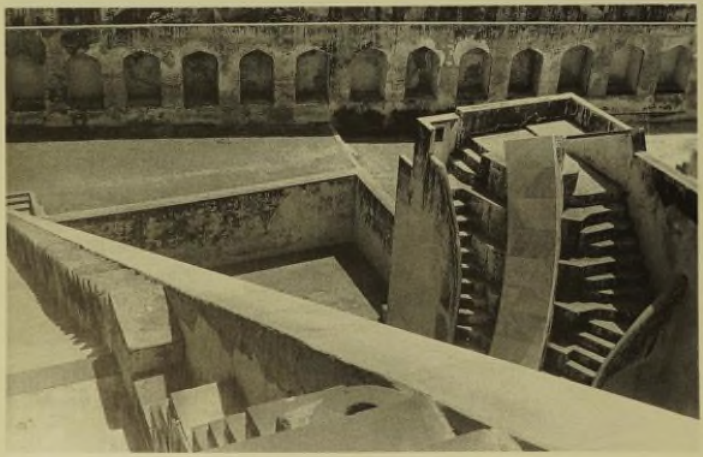


Jami Mosque
New Delhi, India
Completed *c.* 1650

Built in red sandstone and white marble by Shāh Janān, this was the main mosque of his palace-city, Shāhjahanabad. The main façade is composed of open arcades with a monumental entrance and minarets at the corners.

Tomb of Muhammad 'Ādil Shāh
(Gul Gunbad)
Bijapur, India
1626-56

The building, a giant cube with corner towers, supports a single dome. The decoration is unfinished.



The Observatory of Jai Singh
Jaipur, India
c. 1734

Jai Singh had observatories constructed in Delhi, Ujjain and Jaipur. Their instruments and layout drew upon both Hindu and Muslim astronomical traditions. The standard architectural features included sextants, quadrants and terraces for observing celestial bodies. Set in circular enclosures, huge gnomons were marked with degrees so that the sunset could be measured.

Red Fort
New Delhi, India
1638

This building is not a fort but a palace of Shah Jahān, and it consisted largely of single-storeyed pavilions linked by canals and fountain pools. The lotus pool of the Rang Mahal shown here adapts one of the favourite motifs of Mughal architecture for a fountain and weir.

Koran
Fatiha, (Sura I) India
16th century
British Library, London

The text is written in gold on lapis-lazuli panels set against angular panels of contrasting blue and gold and in borders of lobed butterfly-like medallions. The background is liberally filled with various cloud-scrolls of Chinese inspiration.

Anonymous nasta'liq calligraphy, from an album dating to the end of Shah Jahân's reign
c. 1645
Los Angeles County Museum of Art: The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection

Muslim rulers from the 15th century on collected calligraphy as avidly as painting, mounting them together in albums with, as here, splendidly illuminated margins representing brilliant birds, animals and floral scrolls. Many of the rulers, moreover, prided themselves on their own calligraphic skill.

Noah's ark,
possibly from the *Divan* of Hāfiz
c. 1590
Freer Gallery of Art, Washington

The traditional theme of a man overboard and saved from drowning here has been adapted to illustrate the story of Noah and the animals. This work probably was not directly inspired from the Koranic verse which alludes to Noah as a Prophet, but instead from the later expanded accounts of his life found in collected biographies of the Prophets and Patriarchs of Islam.

The Development of Islamic Art throughout the World: Sub-Sahara, China, South-East Asia

For centuries mud has been almost the only building material available in Sub-Saharan Africa. Wood and stone are scarce. The inhabitants of the area ingeniously adapted this material to their architecture and thus expressed their cultural individuality. Mud-brick gives remarkable architectural unity, from simple houses to impressive mosques; the climatic and ecological benefits it offers are increasingly appreciated by architects all over the world. The impressive verticality of the façades of the great mosques in Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mauritania and Senegal, constructed with wooden framework, show how traditional Western and Central African architecture was shaped to the requirements and traditions of Islam. Similarly, Mauritanian domestic architecture offers a remarkable variety of architectural forms combined with impressively decorated façades.

Small Mosque
Ké Macina, Mali

Mosque of Koudougou
Burkina Faso

Minaret amongst ruins
Chinguetti, Mauritania

Tomb of Sidi Aissa
Ghardaia, Algeria

Wall decoration in plaster relief
Walata, Mauritania

Small Mosque
Dano, Burkina Faso

Great Mosque
San, Mali

Great Mosque
Dakar, Senegal

China

The appearance of Islam in China goes back to the 7th-century Arab traders who travelled through southern India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Thailand and reached Cathay. As early as 651, the Chinese Emperor received a visit from the Caliph's emissary who obtained the authorization to establish the first Muslim embassy at Xian, and in 742 the first mosque was built there.

The Silk Route that connected Xian, the ancient capital of the Chinese Empire, with the West in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times remained important for the transmission of culture and religion. Hence the particular influence of Islam in Western China, at Kashi (Kashgar) and at Turfan in the province of Xinjiang.

Mosque architecture shows noteworthy variations from province to province–Beijing (Peking), Xian and Xinjiang. The Niu Jie mosque in Beijing (begun 962) and the Great Mosque in Xian (begun in 1392), which represents one of the most remarkable Muslim complexes in China, incorporate design and decorative elements of traditional Chinese architecture in their construction. Characteristic of the influence of Chinese architecture is the use of wood and brilliantly painted decoration.

Niu Jie Mosque
Beijing, China
Multi-foiled columns supporting arcades inspired by central Asian design form the structure of the prayer hall.

Although the mosques of Xinjiang, particularly the Amin mosque in Turfan and those of Aitika and Aba Khoja at Kashi, show local peculiarities, they also show the influence of neighbouring cultures in their architectural expression and construction techniques.

Entirely built of mud-brick, the Amin mosque has a spec-

tacular minaret and grand entrance influenced by Persian or Central Asian Muslim architecture. Similar features characterize the Aitika mosque at Kashi, although its decoration and use of wood and columned halls is closer to Chinese traditions.

The mosque and mausoleum of Aba Khoja is the most important architectural complex in Kashi with two prayer halls, a school *madrasa*, a bath and living quarters and a cemetery. Although similar architecturally and structurally to the Aitika mosque, polychrome tile revetments play an important part here, especially in the mausoleum.

This complex strikingly attests to the importance of Islam in Western China.

Amin Mosque, entrance. Turfan, China

Aitika Mosque
Kashi, China

Square bay with traditional Islamic patterns painted in bright colours. Entrance to the Mosque

Aba Khoja Mosque and Mausoleum
Kashi, China

South-East Asia

The Islamic culture of South-East Asia is tempered by non-Islamic values and cultures. The Muslims of Indonesia, for instance, are influenced by Hindu and Animist beliefs and the highly refined Javanese cultural tradition.

Similarly, the architecture of South-East Asia contains many indigenous traditions and forms. The impact of Islam on local architecture may be seen most vividly in the mosques. There appear to have been two styles in the design of the earliest mosques: the first, usually reserved for major mosques, imitated the Arab and Indian buildings with their gilded domes and arched openings. The second, based on indigenous forms, retained the traditional pitched roofs, the division of space and structure by means of timber columns placed according to older rituals, larger openings on the sides and the absence, usually, of an interior courtyard.

Since gaining independence, many South-East Asian countries with Muslim populations (among them Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines), have been increasingly exposed to a 'Pan-Islamic' movement emanating from the Middle East. With it has come an architectural image of what a mosque should look like, with domes, arches, a minaret and a courtyard. Thus, older mosques often receive a dome in place of the traditional roof, while a minaret may be erected next to it, regardless of its appropriateness. In terms of contemporary design, the South-East Asian mosque has not yet satisfactorily solved the problem of simultaneously serving religious functions and expressing, in modern forms, both popular vision and national aspirations.

Zakat Fitrah Mosque
Singapore

Village Mosque
Manila, Philippines

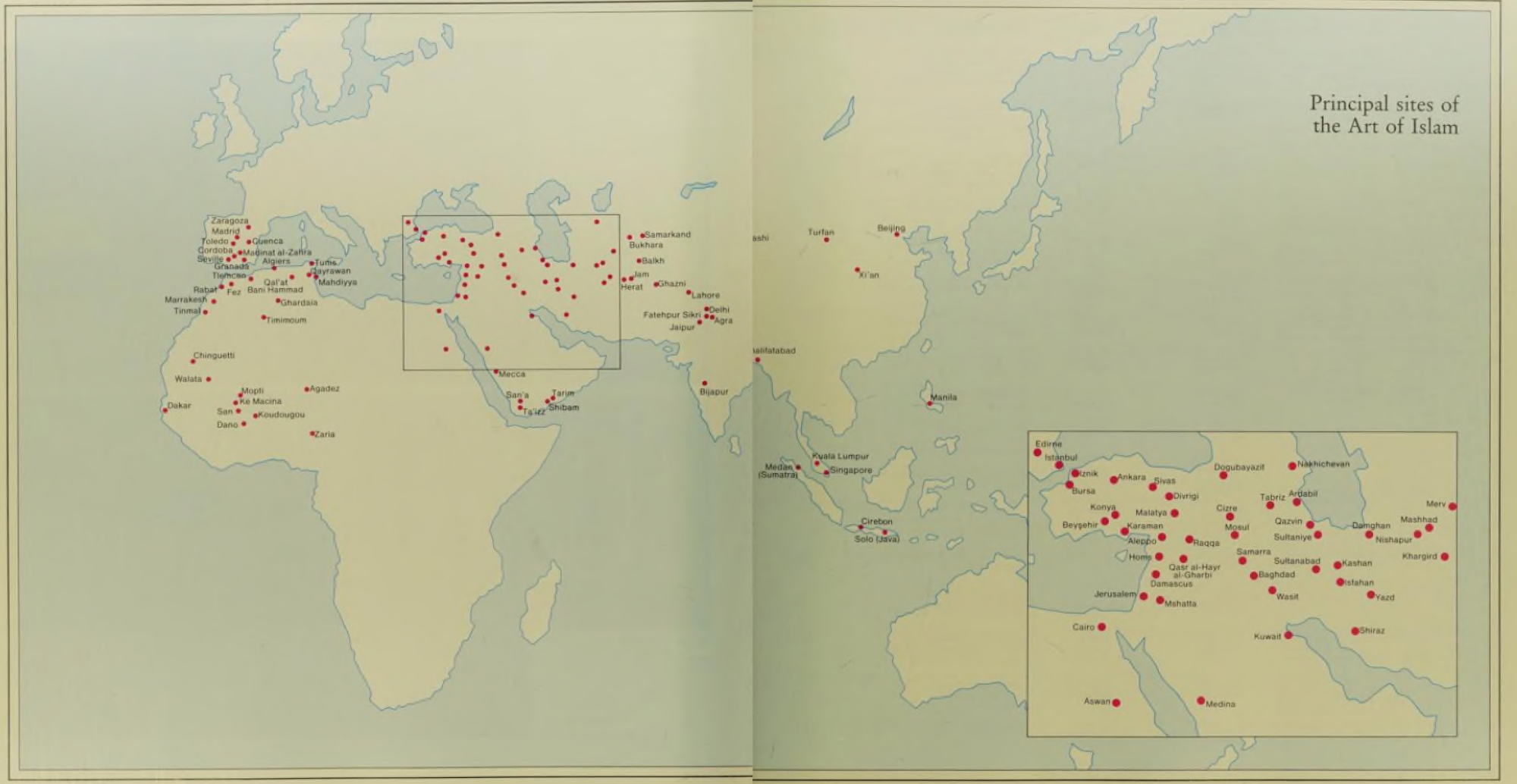
Solo Mosque
Solo, Indonesia
The mosque at Solo, one of the major cultural centres of Java, possesses an ancient *minbar*.

Pangumuman Mosque
Cirebon, Java, Indonesia

Bangumas Mosque
Java, Indonesia

Great Mosque
Medan, West Sumatra, Indonesia
Situated in an area of the country that was influenced by early Arab traders and was among the first to be converted to Islam, this mosque attests to the mixed influence of Arab and Indian architecture.

Principal sites of the Art of Islam



DATES ISLAMIC ERA	DATES CHRISTIAN ERA	DYNASTIES	CAPITALS	PRINCIPAL MONUMENTS
30	650	Umayyads 661-750	Damascus	Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem al-Aqsā Mosque, Jerusalem Great Mosque, Damascus Qasr al-Khayr al-Gharbī Palace
81	700			
133	750	Abbasids 750-940	Baghdad	Great Mosque, Samarra Mosque of al-Mutawakkil, Samarra Palace of Jawsaq al-Khaqani, Samarra Nō Gunbad, Balkh
		Umayyads 755-1031	Cordoba	Great Mosque, Cordoba Palace of Madinat al-Zahra, Cordoba Aljafería Palace, Zaragoza
		Irisids 788-975	Fez	Foundation of the city of Fez
184	800	Aghlabids 800-909	Qayrawan	Great Mosque, Qayrawan al-Zaytuna Mosque, Tunis Great Mosque, Sfax
236	850	Tulunids 868-905	Cairo	Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, Cairo
		Samanids 874-1001	Bukhara Nishapur	Mausoleum of Ismāʿīl the Samanid, Bukhara
287	900	Buyids 932-1001	Baghdad Shiraz	Great Mosque, Nayin
339	950	Ghaznavids 962-1186	Ghazni Nishapur	Mosque and minarets, Ghazni Mausoleum-tower, Gunbad-i Qābūs
		Fatimids 969-1171	Cairo	Great Mosque, Mahdiyya Mosque of al-Azhar, Cairo Mosque of al-Ḥākim, Cairo
		Zirids 990-1150	Qayrawan	Restoration of the Great Mosque of Sfax Qal'a of the Banu Hammād
391	1000	Seljuks 1038-1194	Baghdad	Restoration of the Great Mosque of Isfahan Restoration of the Great Mosque Aleppo Mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar, Merv
442	1050	Almoravids 1056-1147	Marrakesh Seville	Great Mosque (the Kutubiyya), Marrakesh Great Mosque, Seville
		Seljuks of Rum (Anatolia) 1077-1307	Konya	Mosque Alāeddīn, Konya Gök Medrese, Sivas Çifte Minare Medrese, Erzurum
495	1100	Zangids 1127-1211	Aleppo Mosul Damascus	Mosque of Nūr al-Dīn, Mosul Minaret of the Great Mosque, Irbil Maristan al-Nūrī, Damascus
		Almohads 1145-1269	Seville Marrakesh	Great Mosque, Tinmāl Great Mosque, Seville Giralda, Seville
545	1150	Ghurids 1148-1215	Herat	Minaret, Jām

DATES ISLAMIC ERA	DATES CHRISTIAN ERA	DYNASTIES	CAPITALS	PRINCIPAL MONUMENTS
545	1150	Ayyubids 1171-1250	Cairo Damascus Aleppo	Citadel, Aleppo Madrasat al-Firdaws, Aleppo Citadel, Damascus Madrasa of al-Malik al-Sālih Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, Cairo
597	1200	Delhi Sultanates 1215-1526	Delhi	Quwwat al-Islam Mosque, Delhi Qutb Minar, Delhi Moth-ki Mosque, Delhi
		Ilkhans/Mongols 1256-1353	Tabriz Sultaniyye	Tomb of Öljeytü, Sultaniyye Restoration of the Great Mosque of Isfahan Great Mosque, Varamin
		Merinids 1216-1470	Fez	Madrasat al-Attārīn, Fez Madrasat Bū-Ināniyya, Fez Mosque of al-Mansur, Tlemcen Chella Necropolis, Rabat
		Hafsids 1228-1575	Tunis	Porches over the entrance and arcades of the Great Mosque of Qayrawan
		Nasrids 1232-1490	Granada	Gardens of the Generalife, Granada Alhambra, Granada
648	1250	Mamluks 1250-1517	Cairo	So-called Cemetery "of the Caliphs", Cairo Mosque of Sultan Baybars I, Cairo Mosque and Mausoleum of Sultan Hasan, Cairo
		Ottomans 1290-1922	Bursa Edirne Istanbul	Green Mosque, Bursa Mosque of Bayazit II, Edirne Mosque Selimiye, Edirne Mosque of Sultan Ahmed, Istanbul Fountain of Ahmed III, Istanbul
700	1300	Emirates *c.* 1300-1500	Anatolia	
751	1350	Bahmanids 1347-1526	Gulbarga Bidār	
		Turkmans Karakoyunlu and Akkoyunlu 1378-1506	Baghdad Tabriz	Mosque of Jahānshāh Karakoyunlu (Blue Mosque), Tabriz
		Timurids 1378-1506	Samarkand Herat	Tomb of Timur (Gūr-i Mīr), Samarkand Madrasa of Ulugh Beg, Samarkand Mosque of Bibī Khanum, Samarkand Shah-i Zinde, Samarkand Gazur Gah, Herat Mausoleum of Gawhar Shād, Herat
803	1400			
854	1450	Khanate Uzbek 1470-1800	Bukhara	
906	1500	Safavids 1506-1722	Tabriz Qazvīn Isfahan	Mosque of Shaykh Lutfallāh, Isfahan Mosque of Imam (Mosque of Shah Abbās I[er]), Isfahan
		Mughals 1526-1858	Delhi Agra	Jami Mosque, Delhi Tomb of Humāyūn, Delhi Taj Mahal and Red Fort, Agra Tomb of Jahāngīr, Lahore
1112	1700	Qajars *c.* 1740-1800	Tehran	

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About the authors:

The authors, Nurhan Atasoy, Afif Bahnassi and Michael Rogers, are the leading international specialists on Islamic art.

The art of Islam owes its richness and its extraordinary diversity to the vastness of the Islamic world and to its thousand-year-old history. This richly illustrated introduction to the art of the Islamic world is organized thematically and chronologically. It explores the major monuments and the characteristic aspects of one of civilization's most resplendant artistic traditions.